AUGUST, 1950

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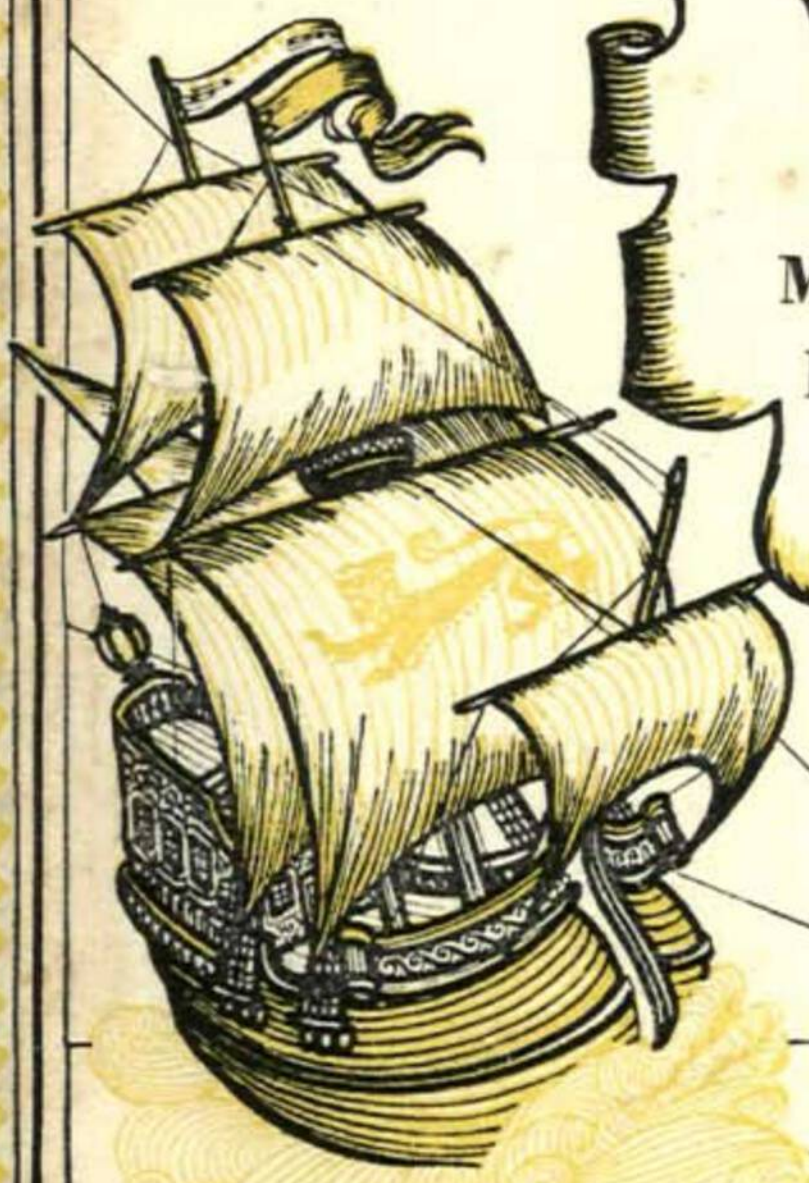
ARGOSY



STORIES BY

NEIL BELL

GERALD KERSH

WILL F. JENKINS

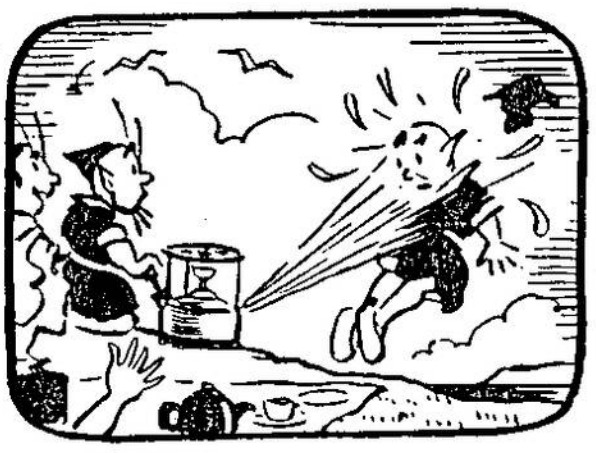
W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

MICHAEL FOSTER

RAY BRADBURY

ERIC KNIGHT

AND OTHERS



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Hullo! Look at this!
There's something amiss.
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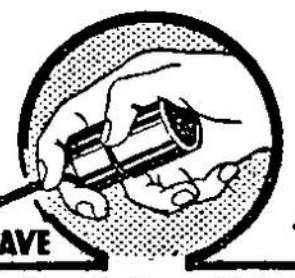

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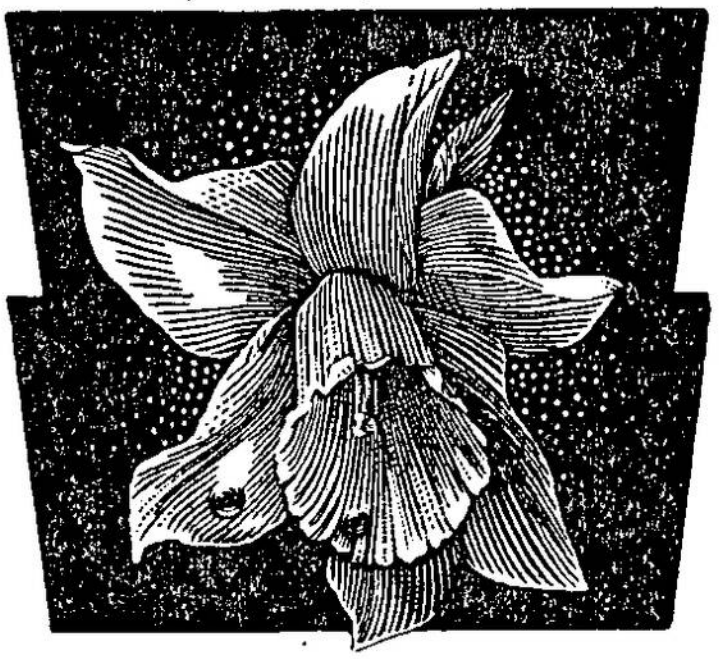

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ARGOSY

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Caravan

I SHOULD like to rise and go
Where the golden apples grow ;—
Where below another sky
Parrot islands anchored lie,
And, watched by cockatoos and goats,
Lonely Crusoes building boats ;—

Where in sunshine reaching out
Eastern cities, miles about,
Are with mosque and minaret
Among sandy gardens set,
And the rich goods from near and far
Hang for sale in the bazaar ;—
Where the Great Wall round China goes,
And on one side the desert blows . . .

Where the knotty crocodile
Lies and blinks in the Nile.
And the red flamingo flies
Hunting fish before his eyes ;—
Or a comer-by be seen
Swinging in a palanquin ;—

Where among the desert sands
Some deserted city stands,
Not a foot in street or house,
Not a stir of child or mouse,
And when kindly falls the night,
In all the town no spark of light.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, 1850—1894

THE UNSUSPECTED

"The method," he said, "is very simple—but quite infallible!"

by NEIL BELL

I WAS walking slowly down Villiers Street when I had an odd encounter with a hatless man. It is true that most men one meets in London these days are hatless; but this man had thick carefully parted grey hair, a clipped grey moustache, was strikingly well tailored, and carried a rolled umbrella; and somehow his uncovered head looked incongruous.

I had closed my shop in the Strand at five o'clock and, as was my usual habit, was making my way to the Embankment because the view on the Surrey side at dusk, just after the lamps are lit, had fascinated me ever since I had first watched it as a very young child. My business is in optical instruments and it had been in the family since the time of George IV when James Bredon, my great grandfather, had sold spectacles, quizzing glasses, and lorgnettes to the nobility and gentry. It was *Bredon & Son* then and it is *Bredon & Son* today, although I have at present no son to carry on this very prosperous old family business. But, as age goes nowadays, I may still describe myself as a youngish man and may confidently look forward to a family, despite the disappointment of my hopes after eight years of marriage.

I was about halfway down Villiers Street, on the left side, when I observed the hatless man coming towards me; and it was, I suppose, the slight incongruity of his appearance which attracted my attention. As we drew near it was apparent that his attention was directed to me and this rather surprised me for he was a complete stranger.

As we came together he did not look at me but slipped something into my hand and passed quickly on. It was a card about twice the size of an ordinary visiting card and in the twilight looked a dark blue colour. I was a little disappointed and annoyed at what I guessed was merely an advertising dodge, and was about to drop the card when I changed my mind and put it in my pocket and quickly forgot all about it.

I live at Woodfield in Essex where, at the time of my marriage, I had bought a very pretty little house with a thatched roof and

trellised roses but with all those conveniences which do not usually accompany such a romantic looking exterior. I go by car each day to business, driving myself. My wife has her own small car and as we are the fortunate possessors of a cook and a maid, and there are no children's wants to attend to, she spends much of her days away from the house shopping, paying calls, playing golf, and making camera studies of countryside scenes, for which she has a gift and has had many of her studies published in the photographic Press.

My wife and I always dress for dinner, whether we have guests or not. We have always done so in my family. This is not a rather foolish piece of snobbery on my part but a sound and sensible regimen of considerable value to one's health and well-being. I know of no better tonic after a hard day in the City than a bath, a change of linen, and the putting on of evening clothes: a truly stimulating tonic, which is more than can be said for the sherry or cocktail with which so many people irritate their stomachs and narcotize their nerves.

It was while I was undressing for my bath that evening that I felt the forgotten card in my pocket and took it out, glancing at it casually and without interest. In the mirrored light of my bathroom I saw that the card was pale blue in colour and silver-edged: quite a decorative presentation. And the printing on it was beautifully done and the type face most attractive: clearly the product of a firm of taste. What was printed on it was, at first glance, more commonplace, if somewhat puzzling:

REMOVERS, LIMITED

Personal readjustments of all kinds undertaken
Consultations free
Terms moderate and by arrangement
We are experts
Write for an appointment; or telephone

CONSULTANT—
The Controller,
Removers, Ltd.,
125, *Selwyn Place, S.W.* *RIVington* 3131

I sat down, half undressed, the card between my fingers, read it through several times, and then sat pondering so long that the bath filled to within four inches of the top, which, being double the depth I customarily have, annoyed me, for I abominate waste, although I have the name, and justly, of a generous man.

I find a hot bath conducive to thought and the flow of ideas, but I could make nothing of the information on the card. What did

Removers mean? Was it another word for Removals? I hardly thought so, for what had Removals to do with *Personal readjustments?* Nothing, as far as I could see. It was all rather bewildering and not a little exasperating. And Consultant-Controller: what precisely did that mean? Wasn't it all rather pretentious? All rather on a par with the appearance of the man who had handed me the card. Of course I could find out by writing or by ringing them up; but I was not sure I really wanted to go to that length to satisfy what was after all no more than curiosity. I am a cautious man and prefer the established conventions to new fangled experiments. These are family attributes and our business owes its prosperity to them.

When I got out of my bath I had not at all decided what I was going to do about the card; nor had I, when presently I went down to dinner.

I said nothing to my wife about the card. I am not of the opinion that a wife should know everything about her husband's business; or indeed everything about his personal life. There are matters I have never discussed with my wife. She has always been aware of this, and, to the best of my knowledge, has never resented it.

I usually reach my shop about ten o'clock, except on Saturdays when I no longer travel up to Town. I rarely go into the shop now but remain in my cozy little office on the first floor. I have a very efficient manager and three capable middle aged assistants who have been with me since their youth. With such a staff there is no real necessity for my presence, but I like to be there in an advisory and supervisory capacity.

As I drove up from Woodfield that morning I had decided to satisfy my curiosity about *Removers, Limited;* and as soon as I was in my office and had put on my working jacket and performed those little routine jobs I prefer to do myself, such as changing the date on the calendar, and had read the morning's post, I rang up RIVington 3131 and a pleasant girl's voice answered: "Good morning. Messrs. *Removers, Limited.*"

I asked for the Consultant-Controller but declined to give my name to the girl. Presently a man's voice bade me good morning and asked what I wanted.

I described briefly my encounter in Villiers Street and asked what was the nature of the business of *Removers, Limited.*

To my surprise the voice then said: "Do you wish for an appointment, Mr. Bredon?" I asked how my name was known and the reply came, and I had the feeling that a smile accompanied it: "It is part of the business of *Removers, Limited* to know such things."

As we all do when talking over the telephone with a stranger, I was visualizing the voice's owner and saw a dark handsome man of middle age; a big, bluff genial fellow. The voice was deep and musical and lent some support to this image in my mind. I said, a trifle hesitatingly, for I was by no means certain that I did, that I would like an appointment the same afternoon and that three o'clock would suit me admirably. And just before three I went along to Selwyn Place.

No. 125 was a quite unpretentious looking building. It had the appearance of a lawyer's chambers. But inside it was handsomely, even luxuriously, furnished and there was an atmosphere of solid prosperity.

I had to wait a few minutes in a pleasant room overlooking a small public garden until a page conducted me to a lift; I was presently shown into the office of the Consultant-Controller. He was extremely unlike my mental image of him, being a smallish spare man of about fifty; well, but very quietly, dressed, and of grave demeanour. He might have been an old family solicitor or medical man.

After the usual preliminary courtesies I came straight to the point, as is my way, and asked him the nature of the business he controlled.

"We are removers," he said.

"Not furniture removers surely?" I said, my tone no doubt expressing something of the disappointment I felt.

His reply astonished me. "Oh dear no!" he replied, "we remove people." Noticing my astonishment and indeed bewilderment he continued, with much suavity of both voice and manner, "We remove unwanted people. It is very simple and, although doubtless it will momentarily seem strange, even fantastic, to you, further consideration will reveal it as merely plain commonsense. There are many unwanted people: unwanted husbands; unwanted wives; unwanted elderly relatives; business associates; or public men. We remove them."

"Remove them," I repeated. "I'm afraid I don't understand you. What do you mean by remove?"

"I mean remove. Just that. We eliminate them. If you prefer the current colloquialism, we liquidate them."

I stared at him. "Do you mean you kill them?"

His neat head slowly nodded. "We remove them."

"But—but," I said, "surely that is murder."

"It is removal. Come. Let us consider the matter as reasonable adult civilized beings and put aside those prejudices which are after all merely the superstitions of an adolescent community. Some

people are necessary; some are unnecessary; redundant. We remove them. Hitherto such removals have been done by amateurs and have therefore been done clumsily and with much botching and consequent trouble and fuss. We are experts. We do not bungle. Our work is carried out with the utmost professional skill and there are no troublesome consequences. We guarantee that. Naturally our fees are high."

I pulled myself together. "Are you calmly telling me that you murder people for payment?"

"I am telling you, Mr. Bredon, that we remove unwanted people for an adequate fee. If you wish for our service, as I believe you do, it is at your disposal."

"Are you suggesting," I began, but he put up a hand and for the first time smiled faintly. "I am not suggesting. We could not conduct our business on suggestions or probability or guesswork. We have, with reasonable certainty, to know. We know, because it is our business to know such things, that you have need of our services. I will return to that personal aspect in a moment. *Removers, Limited* has now been operating in Britain for just over five years. During that time we have removed seven hundred and fifty people: five hundred and twenty female and two hundred and thirty male. The majority of these were unwanted wives or husbands who are of no special interest; nor are the cases of unwanted elderly relatives.

"The list also includes a dozen well-known political gentlemen; no fewer than seven eminent members of the Services; five judges; three of the High Court; six medical specialists; and of the artistic professions, including the theatrical, a full score. I regret I cannot give you access to our files, you will appreciate that I am sure. You would find them absorbing reading and many of the names there would be very familiar to you. Some of them, I am proud to say, were, before we removed their owners, almost household words.

"You are obviously anxious to ask me a question. It concerns our methods. It is a natural curiosity but you will not of course expect me fully to satisfy it. Our methods are a very valuable business asset and we do not divulge them to our clients. No reasonable person expects any business undertaking to divulge its secret processes. It is enough that our methods are adequate. There is no harm in my telling you that quite a few of our removals are apparently accidents; quite a fair proportion indeed. You will be familiar with the many instances during the past five years of people inexplicably falling in front of trains; or from fifth floor windows; quite a fair percentage of these were ours. And the mounting road casualties. My dear Mr. Bredon, you would be astounded if I revealed to you how many fingers we have in that pie. And food

poisoning. That is the simplest of all our methods. Quite child's play. Has it ever occurred to you that it is not necessary to put poison into a food to make it deadly ? Quite ordinary food is lethal, if certain conditions are observed. We observe them. Or see that they are observed.

" We have a large staff. Our costs are high, as are our overheads. And so fees are commensurate. It comes down to this : the amateur bungles this business of removing and pays for his clumsiness, often with his life. We, as experts, do a professional job and we demand a high fee for our skill. It is surely more sensible to pay a high fee than to pay with one's life. And now to more personal matters. But perhaps you have a question to ask."

" Well, yes," I said, " the man who gave me your card was of course one of your agents : may I ask if he distributes them indiscriminately ? "

" Oh dear no ; with the utmost discrimination, I assure you. They are handed only to people who we have reason to assume are in need of our services."

" On what do you found such assumptions ? "

" The closest investigation. We have a large staff of highly skilled male and female investigators."

" And my personal affairs have been the subject of such investigation ? "

" Precisely."

" Are you not afraid to make such disclosures to me ? "

" Not at all. This is a confidential talk and you are not the man to violate a confidence. Even if you did, who would believe so fantastic, so preposterous a story ? "

" It might be possible to prove its truth ; or at least to have investigated some of those many deaths for which you claim to be responsible."

" We have taken care of all that. You may be easy on that point, Mr. Bredon. And now, if you are satisfied, we will come to your own case. You wish to have someone removed ? "

" Yes."

" It is your wife ? "

" Yes. We are estranged. And I wish to marry—"

" Your motives do not concern us. It shall be done. Have you any stipulation to make as to when ? "

" The sooner the better."

" Admirable. The fee will be three thousand pounds : one thousand payable immediately and the balance within a week after the funeral. If you prefer to pay the whole amount now there will be a five per cent discount."

" I should prefer that."

" Very good, Mr. Bredon."

" Will you want to see me again ? "

" I do not think so ; but if anything should arise, which is most unlikely, we will communicate with you."

I gave him my cheque and after a few words about the political situation we shook hands and parted.

A week later my wife was killed. A heavy lorry coming round a bend on the Epping road, skidded on the muddy surface and crashed into her small car. It was most skilfully done, and I was the recipient of much sympathy. There were many beautiful wreaths. The staff at my shop sent a very handsome affair, but rather too ornate for my taste. My own was quite a simple little thing of arum lilies.

I did not marry again until a full year had passed. There are certain delicacies in these matters which ought to be observed and I felt I owed this to my late wife.

My second marriage was four years ago. They have been very happy years, although our union has not been blessed with children. But that is of no account now. Nothing matters except my own personal safety and that this was in great and perhaps immediate peril I learned but a few months ago.

My wife was out and I was reading in my study when I heard the intolerable noise of a window banging. We have casement windows. I was very comfortable, enjoying my pipe and book, and I did not want to move. But I could not endure that wretched banging, so I got up to look for the cause and found that it came from my wife's boudoir, where the window had become unlatched.

I fastened it. I was irritated at this interruption of my quiet and moved hastily and clumsily away but as I turned, I upset my wife's pretty but rather gimcrack little escritoire, which she quite rightly always kept locked. The shock of its fall caused the catch of the drawer lock to drop and its contents tumbled out. As I hastily replaced them a card slipped from between some envelopes. It was a pale blue card, bright and new : the business card of *Removers, Limited ;* and, except for its newness, a facsimile of the one I had long ago burnt.

I stared at it in horror as the full realization of what it meant came to me. I felt physically sick with terror.

I put the escritoire back in its place and, with a key which I had had made and which, naturally, my wife did not know I possessed, I relocked the drawer and made my way back to the study to think.

It was starkly clear to me that I stood in the utmost peril of death. How long had my wife had the card ? Fortunately I could fix the time with some certainty : I had had occasion, five days

earlier, to go to the drawer of her escritoire ; the card was not there then. I was positive of that. So it probably had not been in her possession for more than four days. But had she meanwhile called upon the Consultant-Controller ? That was the vital, and terrifying question.

If she had, then my next meal in the house might kill me ; my next drive to town might involve me in a fatal accident. I had to do something and I had to do it without delay.

I left a note for my wife, telling her I had been called to Edinburgh on urgent business and would write to her from there. I went up to London by train, thence to Folkestone and crossed to France taking refuge in a small suburban hotel. From there I wrote to my solicitor instructing him to sell out *Bredon & Son*, lock, stock, barrel and goodwill. Two months later I received his cheque for the final settlement of my affairs. It was for an amount ample to keep me in comfort for the rest of my life which will, I trust, be a long one. Where I am now living is no one's concern but mine. It is a pleasant village, in a pleasant climate and among pleasant simple people.

It is scarcely necessary to add that 125 Selwyn Place is not the real address of *Removers, Limited* ; nor RIVington 3131 the correct telephone number. The last thing I want to do is to launch an official enquiry concerning that nest of murderers.

But should you ever have urgent need of its services you will doubtless in due course have its blue card deftly slipped into your hand.

It is, I am convinced, only because the fees of *Removers, Limited* are so high that the clumsy amateur murderer remains among us, a menace as much to himself as to the rest of the community and a lamentable example of the persistence of primitive habits of thought and action in a civilized society.

* * *

HAPPY RETURN

One hot morning Lawrence of Arabia was standing on the porch of his Cairo hotel. A woman anxious to be seen in his company approached him.

" Imagine, Colonel Lawrence ! " she cried, fanning herself vigorously. " Ninety two already ! "

" Indeed ! " returned Lawrence pleasantly. " Congratulations, Madam, and many happy returns of the day ! "

Told by E. E. EDGAR

LOVE LETTER

To have fallen in love with his own wife—it was a situation of exquisite irony

by WILL F. JENKINS

AT High Mass in the cathedral of Lima, the young Doña Ysabel knelt devoutly beside her husband. It was in the year 1724, when all people knew that the pattern of life was unchangeable, and it was very comforting to speak to *Nuestro Padre Diós* in such an atmosphere. There were vast cool shadows all about, and in niches there were the sculptured figures of saints, waiting patiently to help people who might need them. The choirboys, with dark Indian faces and surplices of lace, sang like angels and on the altar the small candle flames burned quietly and very reassuringly.

Doña Ysabel prayed devoutly for her grandparents, who were with God, and for her parents, who were not. She prayed very dutifully for her husband beside her, for his contentment and happiness. And then the young Doña Ysabel swallowed. There was a special matter to be attended to today.

So she explained very earnestly to *Nuestro Padre Diós* that the young man who loved her—she did not know his name—did not really mean to do wrong and therefore she begged that he not be judged too harshly. She would, she promised humbly, be as good as possible and especially obedient to her husband. She would even—this was terrifying—tell her husband all about the matter. But especially she begged *Nuestro Padre* not to be too displeased with the young man for loving her, a married woman, because he said he could not help it.

The young Doña Ysabel was very lovely in her earnestness. She was seventeen and she had been married almost a year. Beside her, her husband glanced at her face in the dimness of the cathedral and knelt with his bony hands clasped in grim almost formidable quiet.

Don Jaime Cristobal Ortillo de Alarcón was considered by most people a man to be much envied. He was of a great family, his estates stretched for leagues, his mansion in Lima was among the most stately and he literally did not know how rich he was. Most men, though, would have envied him for the beautiful Doña Ysabel, who was his wife.

But Don Jaime, during mass, was thinking of the very peculiar

doom that had come to him. His marriage to Doña Ysabel had been arranged by the representatives of the two great families concerned. It had been contrived with all the formality and punctilio and state of a royal alliance. But Don Jaime was fifty-and-something. And since his marriage he had fallen desperately in love with his wife.

It was a situation of such exquisite irony that it was never very far from his thoughts. He was actually two years older than Doña Ysabel's father and he felt for her all the tragically earnest adoration of a boy, and to express it would be grotesque.

The voices of the choirboys rose to the roof of the cathedral. And Don Jaime thought of his peculiarly hopeless love for his young wife and Doña Ysabel prayed for a young man who had sent her a love letter. It was an almost incoherent letter, to be sure, but it told her of the sort of tender worship which only a girl of seventeen can believe in and only a young man of twenty can experience. It was the sort of love which, as a woman married to Don Jaime, she would never know.

The stately ceremony at the altar ended. Outside the cathedral Don Jaime handed his wife with great dignity into the magnificent coach with its four horses. The liveried outriders cleared the way and the coach went rumbling towards the mansion in which Doña Ysabel and her husband lived.

" There is—something I need to tell you," said Doña Ysabel in a low voice as the great coach lurched and swayed. " I," she said with difficulty, " I—I have a lover."

Her husband was unnaturally and terribly still. She added unsteadily, " I—do not know who he is, of course. I—do not wish to. He—sent me a letter."

Don Jaime, who was fifty-and-something, breathed again. He said with dry irony, " It must be a remarkable document."

" I have—destroyed it," said Doña Ysabel. She added humbly, " I would have shown it to you but I was afraid it might betray him in some way I would not know. I do not think he meant evil."

" That," said Don Jaime, " is a remarkable statement. But why did you tell me ? "

" I thought that I should," said Doña Ysabel. She did not mention that she had promised *Padre Diós* to do so. " You are my husband and, now that you know, you can make sure that I act as I should."

Don Jaime regarded her with a wry astonished tenderness.

" My dear," said Don Jaime gently, " you have already acted as you should. You even did well to destroy the letter. It would have been unfortunate if I had been forced to know that the son of an acquaintance wrote a love letter to my wife. Did you answer it ? "

" Oh, no ! " said Doña Ysabel. She added, " I thought of telling him never to write to me again. But I did not."

" I could not possibly have suggested more discreet behaviour," said Don Jaime.

She grew uneasy. His expression was not of anger but of ironic endurance, which seemed to have become habitual of late. It had succeeded a horribly embarrassing doting look, which he sometimes had worn at the beginning of their marriage. She watched his face timidly and he smiled at her.

" My dear," said Don Jaime reassuringly, " you are a perfect wife."

She felt a surge of gratitude. It occurred to her that if he were, say, her father or her uncle, she could love him very much. She touched his hand gratefully and was silent. She tried to thrust away the curiosity which made her wonder about the young man, but somehow she felt that he would be twenty years old, with intense black eyes.

The city of Lima, the City of the Kings, lay quietly beneath star-studded skies at night and under a brazen sky by day. In its streets all people knew that poverty, like riches was ordained and that resignation was a necessity. Happiness might be glimpsed and briefly enjoyed but never seized.

Perhaps this was in the mind of Don Jaime on a certain night as he sat in state in a great brocaded chair, with a candelabrum by his elbow. He was arranging his affairs for departure to his estates in the south. But always there was in his mind his love for his young wife.

He observed himself these days with cynical detachment. At fifty-and-something he was still a romantic. He had a young man's desperate need to attain rapture by conferring it. But Don Jaime could not bring rapture to a seventeen year old girl. So he suffered, observing himself with the bitter humour of an experienced man.

He had accepted her revelation of an unknown lover as a confidence rather than a confession. She had been trained, as all girls of good families were trained, not even to hope for more than kindness in a husband chosen for her. Don Jaime's understanding made her feel a great fondness for him.

Don Jaime sat in the stately chair with a steward's report in his hand. The lovesick youth who survived within him writhed in frustration. By acting so indulgently about the young man's letter, he had caused Doña Ysabel to love him dearly—like a father or an uncle.

There was the respectful murmur of a servant at the door. Don Jaime rose with courtly dignity as his wife approached. She was

very pale, and there was no trace of confidence in her manner as she stood before him.

" I have had another letter," said Doña Ysabel unsteadily. " It—it is of love for me. It is your right to read it."

Don Jaime handed her gravely to a chair. He seated himself. He did not look at the parchment in her shaking fingers.

" You are distressed," he said.

" He—loves me," said Doña Ysabel trembling. " I do not know who he is. It is wrong for him to think such things of me. But it—it is beautiful ! "

Don Jaime did not shrug his shoulders. He said composedly, " It is the *same* young man ? "

She nodded. Her breath came quickly.

" He says that he has seen me recently and—" her voice broke, " he tells me how he loves me. It is written as a poem."

" Ah ! " said Don Jaime in a dry voice. " His madness now takes that form ! " Then he asked, " Is his verse passable ? "

Doña Ysabel held out the parchment. Don Jaime held up his hand.

" I would rather not see the handwriting," he observed, " unless he is impertinent or—presuming."

" Oh no ! " protested Doña Ysabel. " It is beautiful ! If you will not read it, may I ? "

" To be sure," said Don Jaime.

Doña Ysabel read softly. The poem was not very long and not at all elaborate. But her voice shook. The verses were like the murmurings of one who suddenly beholds the morning sun, after having seen only stars in all his life before. They were like the prayer of one who worships without pride. Doña Ysabel, reading, caught her breath.

" It is so beautiful ! " she said, " and so wrong ! "

Don Jaime paused, acutely aware of his young wife's distress.

" It is not the first time," he admitted with a little sigh, " that passable poetry has resulted from a situation to be deplored."

" But what shall I do ? " asked Doña Ysabel hopelessly.

" There is nothing to be done," said Don Jaime. " We will go to our estates, where the young man will hardly follow. And I have known, myself, what it is to love someone without any hope at all. I can feel a certain compassion for him. I hope he will not force action upon me ! "

" But there is no hint of hoping for a reply ! " protested Doña Ysabel. " Here ! Read ! "

Don Jaime waved it aside.

" I would rather not see the handwriting." Then he added

grimly, " And I repeat that I can have fellow feeling for a lover who is hopeless of happiness in his love."

Doña Ysabel looked at her elderly husband with something like puzzlement for an instant and then her face cleared. An eager sympathy came into her face. She was very young. It was heartbreaking to see her roused to tenderness towards him.

" Some day you will tell me ? " she asked softly. " I should like to know about her ! " Then she smiled at him. " I will try not to be jealous ! "

Don Jaime smiled also, amused at the idea that Doña Ysabel should ever be jealous of him. But when she had gone the smile turned into a cynical grimace. He sat down heavily, savouring the fine irony of his young wife's asking to hear the tale of his hopeless love, when she was its object.

When they returned to Lima, the year was far advanced. Don Jaime was thinner now. He was greyer, too. He had exerted himself without stint on the remote estates his ancestors had won in the Conquest. He had put forth unexampled efforts to seem romantic to his young wife. The result was that he had further gained her admiration. She was more fond of him than she had ever been and vastly more confident of his good will.

They had been back in Lima for nearly a month when she came to him, with assurance this time. She did not tremble, certain that he would always be glad of her happiness even when it did not come through him.

Don Jaime was not well that day. He apologized ruefully for not rising when she entered. She said breathlessly, " I have another letter from the young man. He knows I have returned ! "

Don Jaime raised his eyebrows.

" It is another poem," said the Doña Ysabel. " You will cry when you hear it ! "

" If I should not weep," objected Don Jaime benignly, " would my lack of tears be considered criticism ? "

Doña Ysabel laughed a little. " You *must* listen ! " she said eagerly. " I could not be pleased if you did not ! "

Don Jaime shrugged slightly. He composed himself to hear.

As she read this time, it occurred to him sitting among pillows in the great brocaded chair, that no poet could possibly have his words more favourably presented than in just this way. No poem could be more filled with the essence of a love song, than when the words fell from such lips as those of Doña Ysabel, read by such eyes, spoken with her yearning voice.

Don Jaime conceded that a man's heart was in the poem. It could not have been written by anyone but a man seeking desperately

to speak of love, quietly and urgently, and, it should be admitted, in beautiful words.

When she had finished Doña Ysabel looked up at her husband. But Don Jaime had regained his normal expression.

" The young scoundrel," said Don Jaime, " has a certain flair."

The Doña Ysabel smiled and said unsteadily, " Was anyone ever loved like this before ? "

" I have known people to think so," said Don Jaime. His hand shook a little. He added with grim generosity, " I will concede that it would be a pity to destroy the manuscript. So complete a fool, in worldly matters, my dear, might even fail to keep a copy for the admiration of posterity ! What more would you have me say ? "

The Doña Ysabel smiled tenderly. " I would like you to let me pray for the young man, that some day he may know the happiness that cannot possibly come of his love for me ! "

" My dear," said Don Jaime, " I do not object to piety in any form."

Young Doña Ysabel's smile was hesitant. " I am grateful that you are—as you are."

Don Jaime coughed. The feeling of irony was almost intolerable.

" It seems to me," he said amiably, " that I have at one time or another expressed the opinion that you are a perfect wife. Now that this mutual avowal of sentiment is finished—what more ? "

The Doña Ysabel put her hand on his. Don Jaime looked down at the young hand covering his own. Her hand was soft and smooth and perfect. His was gnarled and bony and the veins stood out in high relief. He shivered a little.

" I—I wish," said the Doña Ysabel, her voice breaking, "that you and this young man were one ! "

Don Jaime did not answer. He did not stir. She fled from the room. A long time after he rang for a servant. He was very weary, and though it was daytime, he had himself assisted to bed.

The months went by. Don Jaime grew thinner and his hair grew perceptibly nearer to white. The Doña Ysabel was almost eighteen now. On the days when he was not able to go out, she sat with him reading.

He knew that she could not but think often of a young man unknown, who through these months of his illness was writing verses to her and whom she must picture to herself as surely not more than twenty, with intense dark eyes.

She wept very bitterly when Don Jaime died. Her grief was utterly sincere. She was given a letter her husband had made ready in the anticipation of his death. In it he told her ruefully of the romantic insanity which had plagued him and confessed—the

Doña Ysabel was suddenly startled at the familiarity of the writing—that since his love was so hopeless he had practised a certain ruse.

For an elderly husband to avow his romantic love would be ridiculous. But he had needed terribly to let her know she was beloved. So he had written some small verses . . . It would have been grotesque to speak such sentiments through a greying moustache. He had loved her very dearly. And he told her of his absurdity lest she think herself abandoned by her lover when she was a widow.

Doña Ysabel was stunned. Then she was breathlessly proud. She had been loved as only a girl of seventeen can be, as only a boy of twenty is capable of loving. In the fusion of her many dreams she felt for Don Jaime the tenderness she had known for her young lover. She became Don Jaime's wife—as his widow—more truly than she had ever been before.

But perhaps Don Jaime looked a shade more sardonic than ever if *Nuestro Padre Diós* allowed him to know of the yearning prayers the Doña Ysabel offered for her husband thereafter. They were not offered only for an elderly husband who had died, but for the man whom the Doña Ysabel loved as deeply as she could possibly love anyone. He was Don Jaime, to be sure. But in her thoughts and in her faith, that some day she would be reunited with him by infinite love—she thought of him tenderly and fondly, as a young man, no older than twenty, with intense dark eyes.

* * *

ONE IN SEVEN

The Rev. John Brown, of Haddington, the well known author of the " Self-Interpreting Bible," was a man of singular bashfulness. In token of the truth of this statement, it need only be stated that his courtship lasted seven years. This state of things became intolerable. A step in advance must be made, and Mr. Brown summoned all his courage for the deed.

" Janet," said he, as they sat in solemn silence, " we've been acquainted now for six years an' mair, and I've ne'er gotten a kiss yet. D'ye think I might take one, my bonnie girl ? " " Just as you like, John ; only be becoming and proper wi' it." " Surely, Janet, we'll ask a blessing." The blessing was asked, the kiss was taken, and the worthy divine, perfectly overpowered with the blissful sensation, most rapturously exclaimed, " O ! woman, it's gude. We'll return thanks."

From the *Sunday Times*, September, 1849

Soundings

SILENT under silver-sway of cloud in canopy,
secret in the mountain-breast in earth's arm-fold,
deep lies the valley, green with leaf-tall tree,
sun-shimmered, shadow-cast, grey upon the gold :

falling from the hanging height the thread-spun streams,
strung like cords of harp in song, the silence fill
with music made of murmuring that memory dreams,
as if a heart of harmony lay hidden in the hill :

quiet on the blind winds the falcon floats,
holding the hollow air with strength unseen ;
unstirring moves the river ; soft with unheard notes
the steepled heathers whisper and the belled lings lean :

deep as an unsounded water lake-white lying,
time in this green harbourage tideless stays :
pooled in secret hollow, here dwell undying
depths that all the æons knew before the dawn of days.

ALUN LLEWELLYN

KARMESIN AND THE BIG FROST

"The unquenchable spark of genius," he said solemnly, "that gave me inspiration"

by GERALD KERSH

BOP! went my gas ring and extinguished itself. In permutations and combinations of six adjectives and three nouns, I blasted and I damned the bodies and the souls of the Gas Companies. Karmesin was at this moment sitting at my table. He had, in front of him, a tin tobacco box full of cigarette ends; with his usual deliberation, he quietly extracted the tobacco which he put into a saucer, and threw the torn papers back into the box. He could probably see in the dark, so the failure of the gas did not disturb him. As I paused for breath I heard the faint crackling of the tiny pieces of paper and dried tobacco, and the ponderous deliberate voice of Karmesin, demanding in an elephantine mutter:

"What seems to be upsetting you?"

"The gas," I said. "I haven't got another penny."

"Yes," said Karmesin, "it is irritating how little gas one gets for one's penny. Nevertheless, my young friend, you must learn to be philosophical. Light a candle."

"And how the devil," I said, "can I cook an egg with a candle?"

"Eat it raw," said Karmesin; and crackle! crackle! went another cigarette. "Have you got any cigarette papers?"

"No."

"*Chort vozmi!*" bellowed Karmesin.

"Chew it," I said malignantly, pointing to the tobacco.

"All right," said Karmesin. "Do not imagine that it is so easy to defeat a man like me. When you are my age, my young friend, you will learn a little philosophy. Calm, balance, and a faculty for objective reasoning, these things are necessary in this life—"

. . . I have mentioned Karmesin; that powerful personality; that immense old man with his air of shattered magnificence. I wish you could have met him—Karmesin, with his looming chest and unfathomable abdomen, still excellently dressed in a suit of sound blue serge; with the strong, cropped skull and the massive purple face; the tattered white eyebrows and the heavy yellowish

eyes as large as plums ; the vast Nietzsche moustache, light brown with tobacco smoke, which lay beneath his nose like a hibernating squirrel, concealing his mouth and stirring like a living thing as he breathed upon it—Karmesin the greatest criminal, or the greatest liar of his time . . .

" Listen," I said. " Say one cut a piece of cardboard to the size of a penny—"

" No," said Karmesin. " It would be a waste of time. I know a man who tried that once. Not only did it fail to work, but it also jammed the mechanism of the gas meter ; he had to confess to his landlord. To failure was added humiliation. He was a young man like you—"

" Was that one of your great fiascos ? "

" My friend," said Karmesin, " I do not indulge in fiascos. I have a creative mind, a grasp of facts, and an almost incredible foresight. When I swindle a gas company, it is not for pennies but for thousands of pounds."

" Thousands of pounds ? " I asked.

" Well, francs, anyway."

" Do you mean to say you have actually got money out of a gas company ? "

" It was simple," said Karmesin. " But then, all truly great crimes are simple. One may always rely upon the ordinary man's inability to see what is obvious. What is a genius ? A man with a firm grasp of the obvious, plus a creative touch. Thus, in the winter of 1928 when I found myself ill and temporarily short of money in Paris, I discovered a means whereby I could obtain free heating and light, and furthermore get heavily paid for doing so. In cash ! Ten thousand francs. That put me on my feet. It was with the capital that I obtained from the gas company that I was able to go to Brazil and perpetrate perhaps one of the most artistic diamond robberies of all time—"

Karmesin is, as I have said, quite supreme ; if not as a criminal, then as a storyteller. It is quite easy to associate that immense, genial, aged, and philosophical man of mystery with almost any kind of lawlessness. He has a way with him. You tend to believe every word that finds its way through his cigarette stained Nietzsche moustache.

You cannot help liking the man. You feel that if you are to be swindled or otherwise taken in, you would rather have Karmesin do it than anybody else. He is the kind of man, to whom, if he stole your wallet, you would say, " I'm sorry there's not more in it." But, how could such a man stoop to crime ? Or, on the other hand, to lying ?

" I never know when to believe you," I said.

" My dear sir," said Karmesin, " I comfort myself with the memory of this incident, whenever the gas fails.

" This is how it was. I found myself in Paris. In all businesses one has one's ups and downs. This was a barren period. It had been necessary for me, on account of certain unforeseen circumstances, to leave Geneva in a great hurry, and to travel in a third class carriage across France.

French third class carriages even in these times are bad enough, but before the War they were worse. It is scarcely extraordinary, therefore, that I contracted a severe attack of influenza which stretched me on my back in my little room, off the Boulevard Ornano.

" I may say that I carried French papers in the name of Charles Lavoisier. I spoke French like a Parisian. That is nothing. I speak eleven languages like a native, even Finnish.

" You must imagine me therefore lying upon my bed of suffering in this abominable little room in the atrocious cold of one of the severest winters on record. My rent was paid for a quarter in advance, and I had a certain amount of credit with the local tradesmen, but all my portable property was gone. I had no money, and the room was very cold.

" This is the quality of Parisian blankets; they are of some diaphanous substance lightly sprinkled with fluff; when you cover yourself with them all the fluff flies into your nostrils leaving nothing but a sort of woven basis, so thin that no bug dares to set foot on them for fear of falling through and breaking his legs. Even in the midst of my fever my brain began to work. Picture to yourself one unquenchable spark of genius fighting single handed against the fogs and the vapours of influenza—that was the brain of Karmesin! Outside, the snow came down, melted and turned to ice. There were nights of appalling frost—"

" Well," I said, " well, what about the gas company?"

" I'm just coming to that. Even in the midst of my fever I had an inspiration. I thought it out overnight and in the morning my gas lights were burning, my gas fire was glowing and I had stopped shivering; and yet I had achieved this without putting a single coin in the meter and without tampering with its mechanism."

" How did you manage that?"

" Wait! A fortnight passed. The man from the gas company came to empty the meter.

" He read the little dials, saw that so many cubic feet had been consumed, opened the meter and found it empty. He was a French official with an absurd beard.

" He said: ' M'sieur, your meter is empty.'

" I said : ' M'sieur the collector, that is nothing to me.'

" He said : ' But where is the money ? '

" I replied : ' Monsieur, I am a sick man. I cannot sit here and answer your riddles. Have the goodness to go.'

" He said : ' M'sieur, this will have to be reported.'

" I said : ' Go to the devil.' He replaced the padlock and sealed it. All the same, I had gas for the next fortnight.

" Then the collector came again with another official. First of all they examined the seal on the padlock and found it intact ; it was one of those complicated lead seals that cannot easily be tampered with. Then they looked at the glaring lights and the red hot stove. Then the inspector gave me one of those looks with which lesser men than myself are so easily terrified, opened the box and found nothing.

" You could have heard the argument as far away as the Place D'Anvers.

" Result ? They decided that my meter was faulty, took it away, and replaced it with a new one. A devil of a meter, as large and as red as an omnibus, with a mechanism that made a noise like a lady in a car changing gear.

" A week later they came again, again found all the gas lights burning and a room like an oven. It took them about three quarters of an hour to open the meter, they had locked it up so tight. And what did they find ? Empty space ! " roared Karmesin, with a shout of laughter, that made the water jug dance in its basin and the window panes vibrate.

" But, Karmesin," I asked, " how did you manage it ? "

" Wait," said Karmesin. " That is exactly what the gas people asked me. I simply smiled a mysterious smile and said nothing. And then one day, as I expected, I was politely invited to interview one of the directors of the company, and he said something to this effect :

" ' Monsieur Lavoisier, I don't know what you're up to but it certainly can't be legal. What tricks have you been playing with our meter ? '

" I merely smiled. ' Come, Monsieur,' said the gas man, ' we wish to be lenient. We do not wish to prosecute. Tell us exactly how you cause these meters to function without putting any money in, and we will let the matter rest—we might even forget about the small item of gas you have consumed without paying for it ! '

" I said : ' If I tell you, Monsieur, you will not only refrain from prosecuting but you will also pay me twenty thousand francs. If you do not do this then I shall discreetly make public a perfectly simple method whereby the consumers of your gas can get it free

of charge. It really is just as well for you to know these things. It would be worth more than twenty thousand to you.'

"'This is preposterous!' he shouted.

"'You would have to modify all your meters,' I insinuated.

"We compromised at ten thousand, and he went back with me to my room."

"Well?" I asked.

"The whole thing was so simple. I pointed to the bottom of the meter and showed him a tiny hole, no larger than a pinhole.

"That was number one, then I showed him my cake of soap; apparatus number two.

"'Well?' asked the gas company director.

"I took him to the window and opened it. Lying in the window sill were two or three cakes of soap; in each cake an indentation the size of a silver franc.

"It was so childishly simple. Into my little soap moulds I had poured water; the night frost turned the water to ice; the one franc piece of ice was just hard enough to operate the mechanism of the meter; the gas thus obtained heated the room, the heat turned the ice back to water which dripped out at my little pinhole. Result? Invisibility!"

"That's extraordinarily clever," I said. "And did you get your ten thousand francs?"

"Yes," said Karmesin. "But what the devil was ten thousand francs? Five hundred pounds! Five hundred pounds! Chicken feed!"

Karmesin rolled some of his twice-used cigarette tobacco into a kind of mahorka cigarette, in a bit of newspaper, and fumigated his gigantic moustache with a puff of frightfully acrid smoke.

* * *

THE TORTOISE

Come crown my brow with leaves of myrtle,
I know the tortoise is a turtle.
Come carve my name in stone immortal,
I know the turtoise is a tortle.
I know to my profound despair
I bet on one to beat a hare.
I also know I'm now a pauper
Because of its tortley turtley torper.

OGDEN NASH

EBB TIDE

When the anchor's aweigh, and the blue horizon calls

Ships, long salted with the spray,
Welter at our tarry quays.
Younger hands their anchors weigh
Now for the unaltering seas.
Masts that tower like red-wood trees
Creak : the windlass cranks the chain ;
Then—that rush of memories !
Would I were a boy again !

Blue as Hybla, blythe as may,
Hills of thyme, alive with bees,
Lift above the land-locked bay
Cliffs for boyhood's tattered knees ;
Crags where eaglets crouch at ease,
Watching off the Spanish Main,
Skulls and cross-bones on the breeze.
Would I were a boy again !

Hoist your sails : away ! away !
Steer for any port you please,—
Lost Atlantis, far Cathay,
Isles of the Hesperides.—
All their whispering wizardries
Waste like foam to one refrain
Nothing shall your hearts appease.
Would I were a boy again !

ALFRED NOYES

Up in the Morning Early

" Wakee, wakee, wakee ! "

The ship is full of yawning, belching, scratching, struggling sailors. The men of the Middle and Morning Watches are, as usual cursed for the racket they made when they turned out. One man is describing the erotic dream he had, with great attention to detail. Another accuses his neighbour of stealing his socks, and discovers

that he had forgotten to take them off. Some are already unrolling the oilcloth strips and setting the tables for breakfast. There are the inevitable quarrels over buckets of hot water and lavatory basins, of which there are far too few—only six of them for the sixty men on our mess deck alone, and one of them with a hole in its side.

The sun streams through the open ports, the white vests shine as they pass the dusty beams, there is a tousled head and a bronze morning face drawn sharply in light and shadow as a man reaches across the table for a plate. The hammocks are neatly lashed like Italian sausages and carried away to the racks. The huge enamelled teapots arrive. The day begins.

ANTHONY THORNE, *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*

Wander Lust

Beyond the East the sunrise, beyond the West the sea,
And East and West the wander-thirst that will not let me be . . .

Yonder the long horizon lies, and there by night and day
The old ships draw to home again, the young ships sail away ;
And come I may, but go I must, and if men ask you why,
You may put the blame on the stars and the Sun and the white road and the sky !

GERALD GOULD, 1885–1936

Rue with a Difference

The love that is given to ships is profoundly different from the love men feel for every other work of their hands—the love they bear to their houses, for instance—because it is untainted by the pride of possession. The pride of skill, the pride of responsibility, the pride of endurance there may be, but otherwise it is a disinterested sentiment. No seaman ever cherished a ship, even if she belonged to him, merely because of the profit she put in his pocket.

JOSEPH CONRAD, 1857–1924, *Initiation*

Sea Lubbers

"A ship," said Dr. Johnson, "is worse than a jail. There is, in a jail, better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind ; and a ship has the additional advantage of being in danger. When men come to like a sea life, they are not fit to live on land."

BOSWELL, 1740–1795, *Life of Samuel Johnson*

Clear the Decks

And now came a genuine Cape Horn swell . . . coming up from the west . . . some of the power normally belonging to an earthquake. In the darkness of a windless night and a Cape Horn swell there exists a condition nearly as terrifying as any fear can create.

Firstly, there is the sense of utter helplessness and despondency ; but dominating all is the pandemonium of creaking blocks, straining cordage, slatting sails, whilst the hull itself complains groaningly from every rivet and joint. Everything in the fo'c'sle not securely lashed down begins to move about. Buckets, cans, sea-chests, brooms, shoes, mugs, chairs, clothing, go sliding and clattering about as the ship lays over on her beam ends. It is quite impossible to imagine the din . . .

CLAUDE MUNCASTER, *Rolling Round the Horn*

Harbour Bar

Like ivory trees in the moonlight
nude bathers stand on boulders,
as belated gulls sweep in, fold
pinions, and sink to the sedge.

Over the black moon-water, cool
statues lean, crouch to leap,
curve in luminous arcs, and dip
slenderly under phosphorous stars.

No sound but parted water closing
and the surf moaning wearily as
they slip from upper air, down
the glaucous walls, arrowing
to the under, sombre silence.

Down past sleeping monsters and
wraith shapes glimmering, open-eyed,
like round stars in black water.

Down, down the soundless deep
to the rock caves below, to the
lush sea-gardens abloom with
strange leaves and pale flowers.

JOHN LEE HIGGINS

Three of a Kind

Women are jealous of ships. They always suspect the sea. They know they're three of a kind when it comes to a man.

EUGENE O'NEILL, *Mourning Becomes Electra*

AN OFFICIAL POSITION

"There are no two ways about it," he had thought, "I am a happy man"

by W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

HE was a sturdy broad-shouldered fellow, of the middle height; though his bones were well covered as became his age, which was fifty, he was not fat; he had a ruddy complexion which neither the heat of the sun nor the unwholesomeness of the climate had affected. It was good rich blood that ran through his veins. His hair was brown and thick, and only at the temples touched with grey; he was very proud of his fair, handsome moustache and he kept it carefully brushed. There was a pleasant twinkle in his blue eyes. You would have said that this was a man whom life had treated well. There was in his appearance an air of good nature and in his vigour a glow of health that gave you confidence. He reminded you of one of those well fed, rubicund burghers in an old Dutch picture, with their pink-cheeked wives, who made money and enjoyed the good things with which their industry provided them.

He was, however, a widower. His name was Loüis Remire, and his number 68763. He was serving a twelve year sentence at St. Laurent de Maroni, the great penal settlement of French Guiana, for killing his wife, but partly because he had served in the police force at Lyons, his native town, and partly on account of his good character, he had been given an official position. He had been chosen among nearly two hundred applicants to be the public executioner.

That was why he was allowed to sport the handsome moustache of which he took so much care. He was the only convict who wore one. It was in a manner of speaking his badge of office. That also was why he was allowed to wear his own clothes. The convicts wore pyjamas in pink and white stripes, round straw hats and clumsy boots with wooden soles and leather tops. Louis Remire wore *espadrilles* on his bare feet, blue cotton trousers, and a khaki shirt the open neck of which exposed to view his hairy and virile chest. When you saw him strolling about the public garden, with a kindly eye looking at the children, black or half-caste, who played there, you would have taken him for a respectable shopkeeper who was enjoying an hour's leisure.

He had his own house. That was not only one of the perquisites of his office, but it was a necessity, since if he had lodged in the prison camp the convicts would have made short work of him. One morning he would have been found with his belly ripped open.

It was true that the house was small, it was just a wooden shack of one room, with a lean-to that served as a kitchen; but it was surrounded by a tiny garden, within a palisade, and in the garden grew bananas, papaias and such vegetables as the climate allowed him to raise. The garden faced the sea and was surrounded by a coconut grove. The situation was charming.

It was only a quarter of a mile from the prison, which was convenient for his rations. They were fetched by his assistant who lived with him. The assistant, a tall, gawky ungainly fellow, with deep-set, staring eyes and cavernous jaws, was serving a life sentence for rape and murder; he was not very intelligent, but in civil life he had been a cook and it was wonderful what, with the help of the vegetables they grew and such condiments as Louise Remire could afford to buy at the Chinese grocer's, he managed to do with the soup, potatoes and cabbage, and eternal beef, beef for three hundred and sixty five days of the year, which the prison kitchens provided.

It was on this account that Louis Remire had pressed his claim on the commandant when it had been found necessary to get a new assistant. The last one's nerves had given way and, absurdly enough, thought Louis Remire with a good-natured laugh, he had developed scruples about capital punishment; now, suffering from neurasthenia, he was on the Ile St. Joseph, where the insane were confined.

His present assistant happened to be ill. He had high fever, and looked very much as if he were going to die. It had been necessary to send him to hospital. Louis Remire was sorry; he would not easily find so good a cook again. It was bad luck that this should have happened just now, for next day there was a job of work to be done. Six men were to be executed. Two were Algerians, one was a Pole, another a Spaniard from the mainland, and only two were French.

They had escaped from prison in a band and gone up the river. For nearly twelve months, stealing, raping and killing, they had spread terror through the colony. People scarcely dared move from their homesteads. Recaptured at last, they had all been sentenced to death, but the sentence had to be confirmed by the Minister of the Colonies, and the confirmation had only just arrived. Louis Remire could not manage without help, and besides there was a lot to arrange beforehand; it was particularly unfortunate that on this occasion of all others he should have to depend on an inexperienced man.

The commandant had assigned to him one of the turnkeys. The turnkeys are convicts like the others, but they have been given their

places for good behaviour and they live in separate quarters. They are on the side of the authorities and so are disliked by the other prisoners. Louis Remire was a conscientious fellow, and he was anxious that everything next day should go without a hitch. He arranged that his temporary assistant should come that afternoon to the place where the guillotine was kept so that he might explain to him thoroughly how it worked and show him exactly what he would have to do.

The guillotine, when not in use, stood in a small room which was part of the prison building, but which was entered by a separate door from the outside. When he sauntered along there at the appointed hour he found the man already waiting. He was a large-limbed, coarse-faced fellow, dressed in the pink and white stripes of the prison garb, but as turnkey he wore a felt hat instead of the straw of common convicts.

"What are you here for?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"I killed a farmer and his wife."

"H'm. How long have you got?"

"Life."

He looked a brute, but you could never be sure of people. He had himself seen a warder, a big, powerful man, faint dead away at an execution. He did not want his assistant to have an attack of nerves at the wrong moment. He gave him a friendly smile, and with his thumb pointed to the closed door behind which stood the guillotine.

"This is another sort of job," he said. "There are six of them, you know. They're a bad lot. The sooner they're out of the way the better."

"Oh, that's all right. After what I've seen in this place I'm scared of nothing. It means no more to me than cutting the head off a chicken."

Louis Remire unlocked the door and walked in. His assistant followed him. The guillotine in that small room, hardly larger than a cell, seemed to take up a great deal of space. It stood grim and sinister. Louis Remire heard a slight gasp and turning round saw that the turnkey was staring at the instrument with terrified eyes. His face was sallow and drawn from the fever and the hookworm from which all the convicts intermittently suffered, but now its pallor was ghastly. The executioner smiled good naturedly.

"Gives you a turn, does it? Have you never seen it before?"

"Never."

Louis Remire gave a little throaty chuckle.

"If you had, I suppose you wouldn't have survived to tell the tale. How did you escape it?"

" I was starving when I did my job. I'd asked for something to eat and they set the dogs on me. I was condemned to death. My lawyer went to Paris and he got the President to reprieve me."

" It's better to be alive than dead, there's no denying that," said Louis Remire, with that agreeable twinkle in his eyes.

He always kept his guillotine in perfect order. The wood, a dark hard native wood somewhat like mahogany, was highly polished; but there was a certain amount of brass, and it was Louis Remire's pride that this should be as bright and clean as the brasswork on a yacht. The knife shone as though it had just come out of the workshop. It was necessary not only to see that everything functioned properly, but to show his assistant how it functioned. It was part of the assistant's duty to refix the rope when the knife had dropped, and to do this he had to climb a short ladder.

It was with the satisfaction of a competent workman who knows his job from A to Z that Remire entered upon the necessary explanations. It gave him a certain quiet pleasure to point out the ingenuity of the apparatus. The condemned man was strapped to the bascule, a sort of shelf, and this by a simple mechanism was precipitated down and forwards so that the man's neck was conveniently under the knife.

The conscientious fellow had brought with him a banana stem, about five feet long, and the turnkey had wondered why. He was now to learn. The stem was of about the same circumference and consistency as the human neck, so that it afforded a very good way, not only of showing a novice how the apparatus worked, but of making sure beforehand that it was in perfect order. Louis Remire placed the banana stem in position. He released the knife. It fell with incredible speed and with a great bang. From the time the man was attached to the bascule to the time his head was off only thirty seconds elapsed. The head fell in the basket. The executioner took it up by the ears and exhibited it to those whose duty it was to watch the execution. He uttered the solemn words:

" *Au nom du peuple français justice est faite.* In the name of the French people justice is done."

Then he dropped the head back into the basket. Tomorrow, with six to be dispatched, the trunk would have to be unstrapped from the bascule and placed with the head on a stretcher, and the next man brought forward. They were taken in the order of their guilt. The least guilty, executed first, were spared the horror of seeing the death of their mates.

" We shall have to be careful that the right head goes with the right body," said Louis Remire, in that rather jovial manner of his, " or there may be no end of confusion at the Resurrection."

He let down the knife two or three times in order to make quite

sure that the assistant understood how to fix it, and then getting his cleaning materials from the shelf on which he kept them set him to work on the brass. Though it was spotless he thought that a final polish would do no harm. He leaned against the wall and idly smoked cigarettes.

Finally everything was in order and Louis Remire dismissed the assistant till midnight. At midnight they would be moving the guillotine from the room in which it stood to the prison yard. It was always a bit of a job to set it up again, but it had to be in place an hour before dawn, at which time the execution took place. Louis Remire strolled slowly home to his shack.

The afternoon was drawing to its close, and as he walked along he passed a working party who were returning to the prison. They spoke to one another in undertones and he guessed that they spoke of him; some looked down, two or three threw him a glance of hatred and one spat on the ground. Louis Remire, the end of a cigarette sticking to his lip, looked at them with irony. He was indifferent to the loathing, mingled with fear, with which they regarded him. It did not matter to him that not one of them would speak to him, and it only amused him to think that there was hardly one who would not gladly have thrust a knife into his guts.

He had a supreme contempt for them all. He could take care of himself. He could use a knife as well as any of them, and he had confidence in his strength. The convicts knew that men were to be executed next day, and as always before an execution they were depressed and nervous. They went about their work in sullen silence, and the warders had to be more than usually on the alert.

"They'll settle down when it's all over," said Louis Remire as he let himself into his little compound.

The dogs barked as he came along, and brave though he was, he listened to their uproar with satisfaction. With his own assistant ill, so that he was alone in the house, he was not sorry that he had the protection of those two savage mongrels. They prowled about the coconut grove outside his compound all night and they would give him good warning if anyone lurked there. They could be relied on to spring at the throat of any stranger who ventured too near. If his predecessor had had these dogs he wouldn't have come to his end.

The man who had been executioner before Louis Remire had only held the job a couple of years when one day he disappeared. The authorities thought he had run away; he was known to have a bit of money, and it was very probable that he had managed to make arrangements with a schooner captain to take him to Brazil. His nerves had given way. He had gone two or three times to the

governor of the prison and told him that he feared for his life. He was convinced that the convicts were out to kill him.

The governor felt pretty sure that his fears were groundless and paid no attention, but when the man was nowhere to be found he concluded that his terror had got the better of him and he had preferred to run the danger of escape, and the danger of being recaptured and put back into prison, rather than face the risk of an avenging convict's knife. About three weeks later the warder in charge of a working party in the jungle noticed a great flock of vultures clustered round a tree. These vultures, called urubus, are large black birds, of a horrible aspect, and they fly about the market-place of St. Laurent, picking up the offal that is left there by the starving liberated convicts, and flit heavily from tree to tree in the neat, well-kept streets of the town.

They fly in the prison yard to remind the convicts that if they attempt an escape into the jungle their end, ten to one, will be to have their bones picked clean by these loathsome creatures. They were fighting and screaming in such a mass round the tree that the warder thought there was something strange there. He reported it and the commandant sent a party to see.

They found a man hanging by the neck from one of the branches, and when they cut him down discovered that he was the executioner. It was given out that he had committed suicide, but there was a knife-thrust in his back, and the convicts knew that he had been stabbed and then, still alive, taken to the jungle and hanged.

Louis Remire had no fear that anything of that sort would happen to him. He knew how his predecessor had been caught. The job had not been done by the convicts. By the French law when a man is sentenced to hard labour for a certain number of years he has at the expiration of his sentence to remain in the colony for the same number of years. He is free, but he may not stir from the spot that is assigned to him as a residence.

In certain circumstances he can get a concession and if he works hard he manages to scrape a bare living from it, but after a long term of penal servitude, during which he has lost all power of initiative, what with the debilitating effect of fever, hookworm and so on, he is unfit for heavy and continuous labour, and so most of the liberated men subsist on begging, larceny, smuggling tobacco or money to the prisoners, and loading and unloading cargoes when two or three times a month a steamer comes into the harbour.

It was the wife of one of these freed men that had been the means of the undoing of Louis Remire's predecessor. She was a coloured woman, young and pretty, with a neat little figure and mischievous eyes. The plot was well-considered. The executioner was a burly, sanguine man, of ardent passions. She had thrown herself in his

way, and when she caught his approving glance, had cast him a saucy look.

He saw her a day or two later in the public garden. He did not venture to speak to her—no one, man, woman or child, would be seen speaking to him—but when he winked at her she smiled. One evening he met her walking through the coconut grove that surrounded his compound. No one was about. He got into conversation with her. They only exchanged a few words, for she was evidently terrified of being seen with him. But she came again to the coconut grove.

She played him carefully till his suspicions were allayed; she teased his desires; she made him give her little presents, and at last on the promise of what was for both of them quite a sum of money she agreed to come one dark night to the compound. A ship had just come in and her husband would be working till dawn. It was when he opened the door for her and she hesitated to come in as though at the last moment she could not make up her mind, that he stepped outside to draw her in, and fell to the ground with the violence of the knife-thrust in his back.

"The fool," muttered Louis Remire. "He only got what he deserved. He should have smelt a rat. The eternal vanity of man."

For his part he was through with women. It was on account of women that he found himself in the situation he was in now, at least on account of one woman; and besides, at his time of life, his passions were assuaged. There were other things in life and after a certain age a man, if he was sensible, turned his attention to them.

He had always been a great fisherman. In the old days, at home in France before he had had his misfortune, as soon as he came off duty, he took his rod and line and went down to the Rhone. He got a lot of fishing now. Every morning, till the sun grew hot, he sat on his favourite rock and generally managed to get enough for the prison governor's table. The governor's wife knew the value of things and beat him down on the price he asked, but he did not blame her for that; she knew that he had to take what she was prepared to give and it would have been stupid of her to pay a penny more than she had to. In any case it brought in a little money useful for tobacco and rum and other odds and ends.

But this evening he was going to fish for himself. He got his bait from the lean-to, and his rod, and settled down on his rock. No fish was so good as the fish you caught yourself, and by now he knew which were those that were good to eat and which were so tough and flavourless that you could only throw them back into the sea. There was one sort that, fried in real olive oil, was as good as mullet.

He had not been sitting there five minutes when his float gave a

sudden jerk, and when he pulled up his line, there, like an answer to prayer, was one of those very fish wriggling on the hook. He took it off, banged its head on the rock, and putting it down, replaced his bait. Four of them would make a good supper, the best a man could have, and with a night's hard work before him he needed a hearty meal.

He would not have time to fish tomorrow morning. First of all the scaffold would have to be taken down and the pieces brought back to the room in which it was kept, and there would be a lot of cleaning to do. It was a bloody business; last time he had had his pants so soaked that he had been able to do nothing with them and had had to throw them away. The brass would have to be polished, the knife would have to be honed.

He was not a man to leave a job half finished, and by the time it was through he would be pretty peckish. It would be worth while to catch a few more fish and put them in a cool place so that he could have a substantial breakfast. A cup of coffee, a couple of eggs and a bit of fried fish; he could do with that. Then he would have a good sleep; after a night on his feet, the anxiety of an inexperienced assistant, and the clearing away of all the mess, God knew he would deserve it.

In front of him was spread the bay in a noble sweep, and in the distance was a little island green with trees. The afternoon was exquisitely still. Peace descended on the fisherman's soul. He watched his float idly. When you came to think of it, he reflected, he might be a great deal worse off; some of them, the convicts he meant, the convicts who swarmed in the prison a few hundred yards away from him, some of them had such a nostalgia for France that they went mad with melancholy; but he was a bit of a philosopher; so long as he could fish he was content; and did it really matter if he watched his float on the southern sea or in the Rhone? His thoughts wandered back to the past.

His wife was an intolerable woman and he did not regret that he had killed her. He had never meant to marry her. She was a dressmaker, and he had taken a fancy to her because she was always neatly and smartly dressed. She seemed respectable and ladylike. He would not have been surprised if she had looked upon herself as a cut above a policeman. But he had a way with him. She soon gave him to understand that she was no snob, and when he made the customary advances he discovered to his relief, for he was not a man who considered that resistance added a flavour to conquest, that she was no prude.

He liked to be seen with her when he took her out to dinner. She talked intelligently, and she was economical. She knew where they could dine well at the cheapest price. His situation was enviable.

It added to his satisfaction that he could gratify the sexual desires natural to his healthy temperament at so moderate an expense. When she came to him and said she was going to have a baby it seemed natural enough that they should get married. He was earning good wages, and it was time that he should settle down. He often grew tired of eating, *en pension*, at a restaurant, and he looked forward to having his own home and home cooking.

Well, it turned out that it had been a mistake about the baby, but Louis Remire was a good natured fellow, and he didn't hold it up against Adèle. But he found, as many men have found before, that the wife was a very different woman from the mistress. She was jealous and possessive. She seemed to think that on a Sunday afternoon he ought to take her for a walk instead of going out fishing, and she made it a grievance that, on coming off duty, he would go to the café.

There was one café he frequented where other fishermen went and where he met men with whom he had a lot in common. He found it much pleasanter to spend his free evenings there over a glass or two of beer, whiling away the time with a game of cards, than to sit at home with his wife. She began to make scenes. Though sociable and jovial by nature he had a quick temper. There was a rough crowd at Lyons, and sometimes you could not manage them unless you were prepared to show a certain amount of firmness.

When his wife began to make a nuisance of herself it never occurred to him that there was any other way of dealing with her than that he adopted. He let her know the strength of his hand. If she had been a sensible woman she would have learnt her lesson, but she was not a sensible woman. He found occasion more and more often to apply a necessary correction; she revenged herself by screaming the place down and by telling the neighbours—they lived in a two-roomed apartment on the fifth floor of a big house—what a brute he was. She told them that she was sure he would kill her one day.

And yet never was there a more good natured man than Louis Remire; she blamed him for the money he spent at the café; she accused him of wasting it on other women; well, in his position he had opportunities now and then, and as any man would he took them, and he was easy with his money; he never minded paying a round of drinks for his friends, and when a girl who had been nice to him wanted a new hat or a pair of silk stockings he wasn't the man to say no.

His wife looked upon money that he did not spend on her as money stolen from her; she tried to make him account for every penny he spent, and when in his jovial way he told her he had thrown it out of the window, she was infuriated. Her tongue grew

bitter and her voice was rasping. She was in a sullen rage with him all the time. She could not speak without saying something disagreeable. They led a cat-and-dog life.

Louis Remire used to tell his friends what a harridan she was, he used to tell them that he wished ten times a day that he had never married her, and sometimes he would add that if an epidemic of influenza did not carry her off he would really have to kill her.

It was these remarks, made merely in jest, and the fact that she had so often told the neighbours that she knew he would murder her, that had sent him to St. Laurent de Maroni with a twelve year sentence. Otherwise he might very well have got off with three or four years in a French prison.

The end had come one hot summer's day. He was, which was rare for him, in a bad temper. There was a strike in progress and the strikers had been violent. The police had had to make a good many arrests and the men had not submitted to this peaceably. Louis Remire had got a nasty blow on the jaw and he had had to make free use of his truncheon. To get the arrested men to the station had been a hot and tiring job.

On coming off duty he had gone home to get out of his uniform and was intending to go to the café and have a glass of beer and a pleasant game of cards. His jaw was hurting him. His wife chose that moment to ask him for money and when he told her that he had none to give her she made a scene. He had plenty of money to go to the café, but none for her to buy a scrap of food with ; she could starve for all he cared.

He told her to shut up, and then the row began. She got in front of the door and swore that he should not pass till he gave her money. He told her to get out of the way and took a step towards her. She whipped out his service revolver which he had taken off when he removed his uniform and threatened that she would shoot him if he moved a step. He was used to dealing with dangerous criminals, and the words were hardly out of her mouth before he had sprung upon her and snatched the revolver out of her hand. She screamed and hit him in the face. She hit him exactly where his jaw most hurt him. Blind with rage and mad with pain, he fired, he fired twice and she fell to the floor.

For a moment he stood and stared at her. He was dazed. She looked as if she were dead. His first feeling was one of indescribable relief. He listened. No one seemed to have heard the sound of the shot. The neighbours must be out. That was a bit of luck, for it gave him time to do what he had to do in his own way. He changed back into his uniform, went out, locking the door behind him and putting the key in his pocket ; he stopped for five minutes at his

familiar café to have a glass of beer and then returned to the police station he had lately left.

On account of the day's disturbances the chief inspector was still there. Louis Remire went to his room and told him what had happened. He spent the night in a cell adjoining those of the strikers he had so recently himself arrested. Even at that tragic moment he was struck by the irony of the situation.

Louis Remire had on frequent occasions appeared as a police witness in criminal cases and he knew how eager are a man's companions to give any information that may damage him when he gets into trouble. It had caused him a certain grim amusement to realise how often it happened that a conviction was obtained only by the testimony of a prisoner's best friends.

But notwithstanding his experience he was amazed, when his own case came up for trial, to listen to the evidence given by the proprietor of the little café he had so much frequented, and to that of the men who for years had fished with him, played cards with him and drunk with him. They seemed to have treasured every careless word he had ever uttered, the complaints he had made about his wife and the joking threats he had from time to time made that he would get even with her.

He knew that at the time they had taken them no more seriously than he meant them. If he was able to do them a small service, and a man in the force often has it in his power to do one, he never hesitated. He had never been ungenerous with his money. You would have thought as you listened to them in the witness-box that it gave them the most intense satisfaction to disclose every trivial detail that could damage him.

From what appeared at the trial you would have thought that he was a bad man, dissolute, of violent temper, extravagant, idle and corrupt. He knew that he was nothing of the kind. He was just an ordinary, good natured, easy-going fellow, who was willing to let you go your way if you would let him go his. It was true that he liked his game of cards and his glass of beer, it was true that he liked a pretty girl, but what of it ?

When he looked at the jury he wondered how many of them would come out of it any better than he if all their errors, all their rash words, all their follies, were thus laid bare. He did not resent the long term of penal servitude to which he was sentenced. He was an officer of the law ; he had committed a crime and it was right that he should be punished. But he was not a criminal ; he was the victim of an unfortunate accident.

At St. Laurent de Maroni, in the prison camp, wearing the pink and white stripe of the prison garb and the ugly straw hat, he remembered still that he had been a policeman and that the convicts

with whom he must now consort had always been his natural enemies. He despised and disliked them. He had as little to do with them as he could. And he was not frightened of them. He knew them too well. Like all the rest he had a knife and he showed that he was prepared to use it. He did not want to interfere with anybody, but he was not going to allow anyone to interfere with him.

The chief of the Lyons police had liked him, his character while in the force had been exemplary, and the *fiche* which accompanied every prisoner spoke well of him. He knew that what officials like is a prisoner who gives no trouble, who accepts his position with cheerfulness and who is willing. He got a soft job; very soon he got a cell of his own and so escaped the horrible overcrowding of the dormitories; he got on well with the warders; they were decent chaps, most of them, and knowing that he had formerly been in the police they treated him more as a comrade than as a convict. The commandant of the prison trusted him.

Presently he got the job of servant to one of the prison officials. He slept in the prison, but otherwise enjoyed complete freedom. He took the children of his master to school every day and fetched them at the end of their school hours. He made toys for them. He accompanied his mistress to market and carried back the provisions she bought. He spent long hours gossiping with her. The family liked him. They liked his chaffing manner and his good natured smile. He was industrious and trustworthy. Life once more was tolerable.

But after three years his master was transferred to Cayenne. It was a blow. But it happened just then that the post of executioner fell free and he obtained it. Now once more he was in the service of the state. He was an official. However humble his residence it was his own. He need no longer wear the prison uniform. He could grow his hair and his moustache. He cared little if the convicts looked upon him with horror and contempt. That was how he looked upon them. Scum. When he took the bleeding head of an executed man from the basket and holding it by the ears pronounced those solemn words: *Au nom du peuple français justice est faite*, he felt that he did represent the republic. He stood for law and order. He was the protector of society against that vast horde of ruthless criminals.

He got a hundred francs for each execution. That and what the governor's wife paid him for his fish provided him with many a pleasant comfort and not a few luxuries. And now as he sat on his rock in the peace of eventide he considered what he would do with the money he would earn next day. Occasionally he got a bite, now and then a fish; he drew it out of the water, took it off the

hook and put on fresh bait, but he did this mechanically, and it did not disturb the current of his thoughts.

Six hundred francs. It was a respectable sum. He scarcely knew what to do with it. He had everything he wanted in his little house, he had a good store of groceries, and plenty of rum for one who was as little a drinker as he was ; he needed no fishing tackle ; his clothes were good enough. The only thing was to put it aside. He already had a tidy little sum hidden in the ground at the root of a papaia tree. He chuckled when he thought how Adèle would have stared had she known that he was actually saving. It would have been balm to her avaricious soul.

He was saving up gradually for when he was released. That was the difficult moment for the convicts. So long as they were in prison they had a roof over their heads and food to eat, but when they were released, with the obligation of staying for so many years more in the colony, they had to shift for themselves. They all said the same thing ; it was at the expiration of their term that their real punishment began. They could not get work. Employers mistrusted them. Contractors would not engage them because the prison authorities hired out convict labour at a price that defied competition. They slept in the open, in the market-place.

Sometimes they committed a violent crime merely to get back to the safety of prison. Louis Remire was not going to take any risks. He meant to amass a sufficient capital to start in business. He ought to be able to get permission to settle in Cayenne, and there he might open a bar. People might hesitate to come at first because he had been the executioner, but if he provided good liquor they would get over their prejudice, and with his jovial manner, with his experience in keeping order, he ought to be able to make a go of it.

Visitors came to Cayenne now and then and they would come out of curiosity. It would be something interesting to tell their friends when they got home that the best rum punch they had had in Cayenne was at the executioner's. But he had a good many years to go yet, and if there really was something he needed there was no reason why he shouldn't get it. He racked his brains. No, there wasn't a thing in the world he wanted. He was surprised. He allowed his eyes to wander from his float. The sea was wonderfully calm and now it was rich with all the colour of the setting sun. In the sky already a solitary star twinkled. A thought came to him that filled him with an extraordinary sensation.

" But if there's nothing in the world you want, surely that's happiness." He stroked his handsome moustache and his blue eyes shone softly. " There are no two ways about it, I'm a happy man and till this moment I never knew it."

The notion was so unexpected that he did not know what to

make of it. It was certainly a very odd one. But there it was, as obvious to anyone with a logical mind as a proposition of Euclid.

" Happy, that's what I am. How many men can say the same ? In St. Laurent de Maroni of all places, and for the first time in my life."

The sun was setting. He had caught enough fish for his supper and enough for his breakfast. He drew in his line, gathered up his fish, and went back to his house. It stood but a few yards from the sea. It did not take him long to light his fire and in a little while he had four little fish cheerfully frizzling in a pan. He was always very particular about the oil he used. The best olive oil was expensive, but it was worth the money.

The prison bread was good, and after he had fried his fish, he fried a couple of pieces of bread in the rest of the oil. He sniffed the savoury smell with satisfaction. He lit a lamp, washed a lettuce grown in his own garden, and mixed himself a salad. He had a notion that no one in the world could mix a salad better than he. He drank a glass of rum and ate his supper with appetite. He gave a few odds and ends to the two mongrel dogs who were lying at his feet, and then, having washed up, for he was by nature a tidy man, and when he came in to breakfast next morning did not want to find things in a mess, let the dogs out of the compound to wander about the coconut grove.

He took the lamp into the house, made himself comfortable in his deckchair, and smoking a cigar smuggled in from the neighbouring Dutch Colony settled down to read one of the French papers that had arrived by the last mail.

Replete, his mind at ease, he could not but feel that life, with all its disadvantages, was good to live. He was still affected by the amused surprise that had overcome him when it suddenly occurred to him that he was a happy man. When you considered that men spent their lives seeking for happiness, it seemed hardly believable that he had found it. Yet the fact stared him in the face. A man who has everything he wants is happy, he had everything he wanted, therefore he was happy. He chuckled as a new thought crossed his mind.

" There's no denying it, I owe it to Adéle."

Old Adéle. What a woman !

Presently he decided that he had better have a nap ; he set his alarm clock for a quarter to twelve and lying down on his bed in a few minutes was fast asleep. He slept soundly and no dreams troubled him.

He woke with a start when the alarm sounded, but in a moment remembered why he had set it. He yawned and stretched himself

lazily.

"Ah, well, I suppose I must get to work. Every job has its inconveniences."

He slipped from under his mosquito-net and relit his lamp. To freshen himself he washed his hands and face, and then as a protection against the night air drank a glass of rum. He thought for a moment of his inexperienced assistant and wondered whether it would be wise to take some rum in a flask with him.

"It would be a pretty business if his nerves went back on him."

It was unfortunate that so many as six men had to be executed. If there had been only one, it wouldn't have mattered so much his assistant being new to the game; but with five others waiting there, it would be awkward if there were a hitch.

He shrugged his shoulders. They would just have to do the best they could.

He passed a comb through his tousled hair and carefully brushed his handsome moustache. He lit a cigarette. He walked through his compound, unlocked the door in the stout palisade that surrounded it, and locked it again behind him. There was no moon. He whistled for his dogs. He was surprised that they did not come. He whistled again. The brutes. They'd probably caught a rat and were fighting over it. He'd give them a good hiding for that; he'd teach them not to come when he whistled. He set out to walk in the direction of the prison.

It was dark under the coconut trees and he would just as soon have had the dogs with him. Still there were only fifty yards to go and then he would be out in the open. There were lights in the governor's house, and it gave him confidence to see them. He smiled, for he guessed what those lights at that late hour meant; the governor, with the execution before him at dawn, was finding it hard to sleep.

The anxiety, the malaise, that affected convicts and ex-convicts alike on the eve of an execution, had got on his nerves. It was true that there was always the chance of an outbreak then, and the warders went around with their eyes skinned and their hands ready to draw their guns at a suspicious movement.

Louis Remire whistled for his dogs once more, but they did not come. He could not understand it. It was a trifle disquieting. He was a man who habitually walked slowly, strolling along with a sort of roll, but now he hastened his pace. He spat the cigarette out of his mouth. It had struck him that it was prudent not to betray his whereabouts by the light it gave. Suddenly he stumbled against something. He stopped dead. He was a brave man, with nerves of steel, but on a sudden he felt sick with terror. It was something soft and rather large that he had stumbled against, and he was

pretty sure what it was.

He wore *espadrilles*, and with one foot he cautiously felt the object on the ground before him. Yes, he was right. It was one of his dogs. It was dead.

He took a step backwards and drew his knife. He knew it was no good to shout. The only house in the neighbourhood was the prison governor's, it faced the clearing just beyond the coconut grove; but they would not hear him, or if they did would not stir. St. Laurent de Maroni was not a place where you went out in the dead of night when you heard a man calling for help. If next day one of the freed convicts was found lying dead, well, it was no great loss. Louis Remire saw in a flash what had happened.

He thought rapidly. They had killed his dogs while he was sleeping. They must have got them when he had put them out of his compound after supper. They must have thrown them some poisoned meat and the brutes had snatched at it. If the one he had stumbled over was near his house it was because it tried to crawl home to die. Louis Remire strained his eyes. He could see nothing. The night was pitch black. He could hardly see the trunks of the coconut trees a yard away from him. His first thought was to make a rush for his shack. If he got back to the safety of that he could wait till the prison people, wondering why he did not come, sent to fetch him.

But he knew he could never get back. He knew they were there in the darkness, the men who had killed his dogs; he would have to fumble with the key to find the lock and before he found it he would have a knife plunged in his back. He listened intently. There was not a sound. And yet he felt that there were men there, lurking behind the trees, and they were there to kill him.

They would kill him as they had killed his dogs. And he would die like a dog.

There was more than one certainly. He knew them, there were three or four of them at least, there might be more, convicts in service in private houses who were not obliged to get back to the camp till a late hour, or desperate and starving freed men who had nothing to lose.

For a moment he hesitated what to do. He dared not make a run for it, they might easily have put a rope across the pathway that led from his house to the open, and if he tripped he was done for. The coconut trees were loosely planted and among them his enemies would see him as little as he saw them.

He stepped over the dead dog and plunged into the grove. He stood with his back to a tree to decide how he should proceed. The silence was terrifying. Suddenly he heard a whisper and the horror of it was frightful. Again a dead silence. He felt he must

move on, but his feet seemed rooted to the ground. He felt that they were peering at him out of the darkness and it seemed to him that he was as visible to them as though he stood in the broad light of day.

Then from the other side was a little cough. It came as such a shock that Louis Remire nearly screamed. He was conscious now that they were all round him. He could expect no mercy from those robbers and murderers. He remembered the other executioner, his predecessor, whom they had carried still alive into the jungle, whose eyes they had gouged out, and whom they had left hanging for the vultures to devour.

His knees began to tremble. What a fool he had been to take on the job! There were soft jobs he could have found in which you ran no risk. It was too late to think of that.

He pulled himself together. He had no chance of getting out of the coconut grove alive, he knew that; he wanted to be sure that he would be dead. He tightened his grip on his knife. The awful part was that he could hear no one, he could see no one, and yet he knew that they were lurking there waiting to strike. For one moment he had a mad idea, he would throw his knife away and shout to them that he was unarmed and they could come and kill him in safety.

But he knew them; they would never be satisfied merely to kill him.

Rage seized him. He was not the man to surrender tamely to a pack of criminals. He was an honest man and an official of the state; it was his duty to defend himself. He could not stay there all night. It was better to get it over quickly.

Yet that tree at his back seemed to offer a sort of security, he could not bring himself to move. He stared at the trunk of a tree in front of him and suddenly it moved and he realized with horror that it was a man.

That made up his mind for him and with a huge effort he stepped forward. He advanced slowly and cautiously. He could hear nothing, he could see nothing. But he knew that as he advanced they advanced too.

It was as though he were accompanied by an invisible body-guard. He thought he could hear the sound of their naked feet on the ground.

His fear had left him. He walked on, keeping as close to the trees as he could, so that they should have less chance of attacking him from behind; a wild hope sprang up in his breast that they would be afraid to strike, they knew him, they all knew him, and whoever struck the first blow would be lucky if he escaped a knife in his own guts.

He had only another thirty yards to go, and once in the open, able to see, he could make a fight for it. A few yards more and then he would run for his life.

Suddenly something happened that made him start out of his skin, and he stopped dead. A light was flashed and in that heavy darkness the sudden glare was terrifying. It was an electric torch. Instinctively he sprang to a tree and stood with his back to it. He could not see who held the light. He was blinded by it. He did not speak.

He held his knife low, knowing that when they struck it was in the belly, and if someone flung himself at him he was prepared to strike back.

He was going to sell his life dearly. For half a minute perhaps the light shone on his face, but seemed to him an eternity. He thought now that he discerned dimly the faces of men. Then a word broke the horrible silence. "Throw."

At the same instant a knife came flying through the air and struck him on the breast-bone. He threw up his hands and as he did so someone sprang at him and with a great sweep of the knife ripped up his belly. The light was switched off. Louis Remire sank to the ground with a groan, a terrible groan of pain. Five, six men gathered out of the gloom and stood over him. With his fall the knife that had stuck in his breast-bone was dislodged. It lay on the ground.

A quick flash of the torch showed where it was. One of the men took it and with a single, swift motion cut Remire's throat from ear to ear.

"*Au nom du peuple français justice est faite,*" he said.

They vanished into the darkness and in the coconut grove was the immense silence of death.

* * *

VICE VERSA

I am reminded of a clash which once occurred in the House between Lady Astor and the late Jack Jones of Poplar. Lady Astor was a teetotaller, and Jack, it must be sorrowfully confessed, was not. Lady Astor was speaking on the evils of drink and Jack kept up a running fire of interjections.

Finally, Lady Astor turned on him and declared that she shuddered to think of the condition of *his* stomach. Jack rose with alcoholic dignity and protested: "Let the noble Lady leave my stomach alone. I'll back mine against hers any day!"

Told by W. J. BROWN

★*The identity of "Mother Goose," that famous raconteuse of fairy tales, has long been in dispute among her elder zealots.*

France, America, England—all lay claim, her French devotees declaring strongly for their Queen Bertha, "La Reine Pedauque," who, the wife of the eleventh century Robert the Pious, was reputed to have one foot shaped like that of a goose, and an equally remarkable gift for storytelling.

But to those for whom her stories were truly intended, the question of identity is nothing. Enough for us the witchery of her "Once upon a time . . ." and the keen recollection of that familiar old figure from the "long ago" riding through the air on her broomstick with tales from a magic land that is seventeen times as high as the moon.

RIQUET WITH THE TUFT

translated by G. M. GENT

THERE was, once upon a time, a Queen, who was brought to bed of a son so hideously ugly, that it was long disputed whether he had human form. A Fairy, who was at his birth, affirmed, "He would be very amiable for all that, since he should be endowed with Abundance of Wit." She even added, that it would be in his power, by virtue of a gift she had just then given him, to bestow on the person he most loved as much wit as he pleased.

All this somewhat comforted the poor Queen, who was under a grievous affliction, for having brought into the world such a deformed marmot. It is true that this Child no sooner began to prattle, but he said a thousand pretty things, and had something of I know not what, that he charmed everybody.

I forgot to tell you, that he came into the world with a little tuft of hair upon his head, which made them call him Riquet with the Tuft; for Riquet was the family name.

Seven or eight years after this, the Queen of a neighbouring kingdom was delivered of two daughters at a birth. The first-born of these was more beautiful than the day; whereat the Queen was so very glad, that those present were afraid that her excess of joy

would do her harm. The same Fairy, who had assisted at the birth of little Riquet with the Tuft, was here also; and to moderate the Queen's gladness, she declared, "That this little Princess should have no wit at all, but be as stupid as she was pretty."

This mortified the Queen extremely; but some moments afterwards she had far greater sorrow; for the second daughter she delivered of was very ugly.

"Do not afflict yourself so much, Madam," said the Fairy; "your daughter shall have it made up to her otherwise, and she shall have so great a portion of wit, that her want of beauty will scarcely be perceived."

"God grant it," replied the Queen; "but is there no way to make the eldest, who is so pretty, have any wit?"

"I can do nothing for her, Madam, as to wit," answered the Fairy, "but everything as to beauty; and as there is nothing but what I would do for your satisfaction, I give her for a gift, that she shall have the power to make handsome the person who shall best please her."

In proportion as these princesses grew up, their perfections grew up with them; all the public talk was of the beauty of the elder, and the wit of the younger. It is true also, that their defects increased considerably with their age; the youngest visibly grew uglier and uglier, and the eldest became every day more and more stupid; she either made no answer at all to what was asked her, or said something very silly; she was with all this so unhandy, that she could not place four pieces of china upon the mantelpiece without breaking one of them, nor drink a glass of water without spilling half of it upon her clothes.

Though beauty is a very great advantage in young people, yet here the younger sister bore away the bell, almost always in all companies from the elder. People would, indeed, go first to the beauty, to look upon and admire her, but turn aside soon after to the wit, to hear a thousand most entertaining and agreeable turns; and it was amazing to see, in less than a quarter of an hour's time, how the eldest, though she was unaccountably dull, took particular notice of it, and would have given all her beauty to have half the wit of her sister. The Queen, prudent as she was, could not help reproaching her several times, which had like to have made the poor Princess die for grief.

One day, as she retired into the wood to bewail her misfortune, she saw, coming to her, a little man, very disagreeable, but most magnificently dressed. This was the young Prince Riquet with the Tuft, who having fallen in love with her, by seeing her picture, many of which went all the World over, had left his father's kingdom, to have the pleasure of seeing and talking with her.

Overjoyed to find her thus all alone, he addressed himself to her with all imaginable politeness and respect. . Having observed, after he had made the ordinary compliments, that she was extremely melancholy, he said to her, " I cannot comprehend, Madam, how a person so beautiful as you are, can be so sorrowful as you seem to be ; for though I can boast of having seen infinite numbers of ladies exquisitely charming, I can say that I never beheld anyone whose beauty approaches yours."

" You are pleased to say so," answered the Princess, and here she stopped.

" Beauty," replied Riquet with the Tuft, " is such a great advantage that it ought to take the place of all things ; and since you possess this treasure, I see nothing can possibly very much afflict you."

" I had far rather," cried the Princess, " be ugly as you are, and have wit, than have the beauty I possess, and be so stupid as I am."

" There is nothing, Madam," returned he, " shows more that we have wit, than to believe we have none ; and it is the nature of that excellent quality, that the more people have of it, the more they believe they want it."

" I do not know that," said the Princess ; " but I know very well that I am very senseless, and thence proceeds the vexation which almost kills me."

" If that be all, Madam, which troubles you, I can very easily put an end to your affliction," said the Prince.

" And how will you do that ? " cried the Princess.

" I have the power, Madam," replied Riquet with the Tuft, " to give to that person whom I am to love best, as much wit as can be had ; and as you, Madam, are that very person, it will be your fault only, if you have not as great a share of it as anyone living, provided you will be pleased to marry me."

The Princess remained quite astonished, and answered not a word. " I see," replied Riquet with the Tuft, " that this proposal makes you very uneasy, and I don't wonder at it ; but I will give you a whole year to consider of it."

The Princess had so little wit, and, at the same time, so great a longing to have some, that she imagined the end of the year would never be, so that she accepted the proposal which was made her. She had no sooner promised Riquet with the Tuft that she would marry him that day twelvemonth, than she found herself quite otherwise than she was before ; she had an incredible facility of speaking whatever she pleased, after a polite, easy, and natural manner. She began that moment a very gallant conversation with Riquet with the Tuft, wherein she tattled at such a rate that Riquet

with the Tuft believed he had given her more wit than he had reserved for himself.

When she returned to the Palace, the whole Court knew not what to think of such a sudden and extraordinary change; for they heard from her now as much sensible discourse, and as many infinite witty turns, as they had stupid and silly impertinences before. The whole Court was overjoyed at it beyond imagination; it pleased all but her younger sister; because having no longer advantage of her in respect of wit, she appeared, in comparison with her, a very disagreeable, homely puss.

The King governed himself by her advice, and would even sometimes hold a council in her apartment. The noise of this change spreading everywhere, all the young princes of the neighbouring kingdoms strove all they could to gain her in marriage; but she found not one of them had wit enough for her, and she gave them all a hearing, but would not engage herself to any.

However, there came one so powerful, rich, witty, and handsome, that she could not help having a good inclination to him. Her Father perceived it, and told her that she was her own mistress as to the choice of a husband, and that she might declare her intentions. As the more wit we have, the greater difficulty we find to make a firm resolution upon such affairs, this made her desire her father to give her time to consider of it.

She went accidentally to walk in the same wood where she met Riquet with the Tuft, to think the more conveniently what she had to do. While she was walking in a profound meditation, she heard a confused noise under her feet, as it were of a great many people, who went backwards and forwards, and were very busy. Having listened more attentively, she heard one say, " Bring me that pot " ; another, " Give me that kettle " ; and a third, " Put some wood upon the fire."

The ground at the same time opened, and she seemingly saw under her feet a great kitchen full of cooks, scullions, and all sorts of officers necessary for a magnificent entertainment. There came out of it a company of roasters, to that number of twenty or thirty, who went to plant themselves in a fine alley of wood, about a very long table, with their larding pins in their hands, and foxes tails in their caps, who began to work, keeping time to the tune of a very harmonious song.

The Princess, all astonished at this sight, asked them who they worked for. " For Prince Riquet with the Tuft," said the chief of them, " who is to be married tomorrow."

The Princess was more surprised than ever, and recollecting that it was now that day twelvemonth on which she had promised to espouse Riquet with the Tuft, she was like to sink into the

ground.

What made her forget this was, that when she made this promise, she was very silly, and having obtained the vast stock of wit which the Prince had bestowed on her, she had entirely forgotten her stupidity. She continued walking, but had not taken thirty steps before Riquet with the Tuft presented himself to her, bravely and most magnificently dressed, like a Prince who was going to be married.

"You see, Madam," said he, "I am very exact in keeping my word, and doubt not, in the least, but you are come hither to perform yours, and to make me, by giving me your hand, the happiest of men."

"I shall freely own to you," answered the Princess, "that I have not yet taken any resolution on this affair, and believe I never shall take such a one as you desire."

"You astonish me, Madam," said Riquet with the Tuft.

"I believe it," said the Princess, "and surely if I had to do with a clown, or a man of no wit, I should find myself very much at a loss. 'A Princess always observes her word,' would he say to me, 'and you must marry me, since you promised to do so.' But as he whom I talk to is the man of the world, and is the master of the greatest sense and judgment, I am sure he will hear reason. You know, that when I was but a fool, I could, notwithstanding, never come to a resolution to marry you; why will you have me, now I have so much judgment as you gave me, and which makes me a more difficult person than I was at that time, to come to a resolution, which I could not then determine to agree to? If you sincerely thought to make me your wife, you have been greatly in the wrong to deprive me of my dull simplicity, and make me see things much more clearly than I did."

"If a man of no wit and sense," replied Riquet with the Tuft, "would be well received, as you say, in reproaching you for breach of your word, why will you not let me, Madam, have the same usage in a matter wherein all the happiness of my life is concerned? Is it reasonable that persons of wit and sense should be in a worse condition than those who have none? Can you pretend this; you who have so great a share, and desired so earnestly to have it? But let us come to facts, if you please. Setting aside my ugliness and deformity, is there anything in me which displeases you? Are you dissatisfied with my birth, my wit, humour, or manners?"

"Not at all," answered the Princess; "I love and respect you in all you mention."

"If it be so," said Riquet with the Tuft, "I am happy, since it is in your power to make me the most amiable of men."

"How can that be?" said the Princess.

"It is done," said Riquet with the Tuft, "if you love me enough to wish it was so; and that you may in no ways doubt, Madam, of what I say, know that the same Fairy who, on my birthday, gave me for gift the power of making the person, who should please me, extremely witty and judicious, has in like manner, given you for gift the power of making him, whom you love, and would grant that favour to, extremely handsome."

"If it be so," said the Princess, "I wish, with all my heart, that you may be the most amiable prince in the world, and I bestow it on you so far as I am able."

The Princess had no sooner pronounced these words, but Riquet with the Tuft appeared to her the finest prince upon the earth; the handsomest and most amiable man she ever beheld.

Some say that the Princess, having made due reflection on the perseverance of her lover, his discretion, and all the good qualities of his mind, his wit, and judgment, saw no longer the deformity of his body, nor the ugliness of his face; that his hump seemed to her no more than the grand air of one who has a broad back; and that whereas, till then, she saw him limp horribly, she found it nothing more than a certain sidling air which charmed her.

They say, further, that his eyes, which were very squinting, seemed to her most bright and sparkling; that their irregular turn passed in her judgment for a mark of a violent excess of love; and, in short, that this great red nose, in her opinion, had somewhat of the martial and heroic.

Howsoever it was, the Princess promised immediately to marry him, on condition he obtained her father's consent. The King being acquainted that his daughter had abundance of esteem for Riquet with the Tuft, whom he knew otherwise for a most sage and judicious Prince, received him for his son-in-law with pleasure; and the next morning their nuptials were celebrated, as Riquet with the Tuft had foreseen, and according to the orders he had a long time before given.

* * *

SUB-ARCTIC

The bookshops in Finland are truly enormous and wonderfully stocked. A Helsinki woman explained to me her country's strong addiction to reading. "It is because of our long winter nights," she said, "when we have nothing else to do." She laughed with a curious merriment. "We are not much interested in love," she added.

ERIC LINKLATER, in *Time and Tide*

ROAD TO FEATHER RIVER

This was no careful ambush, but the glittering equality of gun for gun

by MICHAEL FOSTER

HE saw her for the first time on Sacramento Wharf, with the dust of a hundred stage coaches hanging against the evening sky and the milling uproar of the gold-drunk crowd so tremendous that he could scarcely hear her voice.

He was standing beside his growing pile of freight, his supplies for the summer. The crates and heavily-sewn bags coming off the steamboat all bore the stencil of *Marchand and Co.*, his agents in San Francisco. Near the edge of the wharf, under the boat's high starboard paddlebox with its great scarlet and gilt lettering *Chariot of Fortune*, he was checking the shipment against his own list. When he looked up he saw a Chinese cabin-steward trotting down the gangplank under the awkwardness of a small rawhide trunk. And after a stately moment the trunk was followed by a woman, tall and proud.

She was wearing a green whipcord travelling dress, delicately holding up the heavy skirt with one hand. In the twilight, with the sun gone, her red hair was smooth and dark and unshining. Its weight, pinned back plainly in an array of curls, made her face seem white and startling with its undecorated look of reckless courage. Glancing out over the crowd and seeing an empty place on the wharf beside his stack of freight, she motioned imperiously. The Chinaman swung the trunk off his back, set it down, and slipped his hands inside his quilted sleeves to wait in narrow-shouldered patience while she came walking among the roaring confusion of people and baggage.

Opening her reticule she found a coin; and then she was standing alone beside her trunk with a look of sudden anxiety, unexpected in such a decisive-looking woman.

By this year of 1854 there were a good many women in California who without illusions were adventuring for what they could get on the disorderly fringes of fortune, and often enough you saw one of them stranded. In his lonely and dangerous life there was no room for entanglements. Loud gallantry was all right for the celebrating,

whiskered young men down from the gold creeks, the wild mountain rivers of fortune; but he was playing for stakes more permanent than some shining dust in a dripping and lucky sluice-box.

But a moment later as he lounged with one spurred boot on a heavily crated new saddle, the woman was standing beside him, saying something. Bending towards her in courteous indifference, he caught the dim fragrance of lavender sachet and could hear her voice, low and clear:

". . . I said, are you bound for the Mother Lode country?"

He shook his head. "Further north, beyond the diggings. Up towards Mount Lassen. I'm not a miner."

"I can see that, by the size of your outfit," she said crisply. "That's why I'm speaking to you. You have transportation? And again, judging by this amount of freight, a crew of men?"

"I have a wagon," he said. "And one of my Mexican horse-wranglers is with me."

"Very well," she said, as businesslike as a man, "in exchange for carrying me as far as the Feather River, I'll cook for you."

He hesitated. It was hard to refuse anyone whose eyes were so anxiously pleading.

She said, in an attempt at a wry smile, "Don't be deceived by my nice clothes. I am an excellent cook." Before he could say anything, she told him simply, "It's desperate. Please believe me, it's utterly desperate. For personal reasons."

"Well, all right," he said. "But it will be a slow trip and a rough one. I'm trailing a new bunch of horses up to my ranch."

"Then I'll drive the wagon, so you and your man will both be free to ride with the herd. That will help you, too. You're a horse-breeder?"

He nodded. "To sell to the stage coach lines. I'm just getting my herds built up."

Farther along the wharf, the steamboat *New World* with her bright yellow stacks was loading for her night trip downriver to San Francisco. A shipment of gold was going aboard. Silently watchful shotgun messengers had appeared from nowhere, and through a lane in the crowd came pairs of stevedores bringing the day's treasure from the stage coaches. Each two men carried between them on their shoulders a long pole, and the poles were sagging with the dead weight of narrow cylindrical bags filled with gold dust.

A greasy-looking gambler-type in seedy finery plucked a blind fiddler by the sleeve, turning him away from the edges of the watching mob. As those figures of scarecrow poverty walked slowly towards them, against a trampling background of fortune and of violence, the woman's fingers tightened on the handle of her reticule.

"Pretend to be talking to me—as if you'd been expecting me."

Her voice was hurried. " —In fact, please kiss me. Oh, like a brother, if you wish," she said impatiently. " I won't ask you to again, but this is important."

" All right," he said. " But why ? "

" Because you look respectable and dangerous."

Smiling a little, she offered her face to him. Her eyes, seen so closely, were strange and very clear, autumn-tawny with a few motes of sun-colour round the edges of the iris.

Looking past the close smooth curve of her hair, he saw the gambler hesitate in passing ; and the blind man with his fiddle under one arm stopped obediently, with blankly enquiring black glasses. The thick-fleshed face, as blank as the glasses, was somehow terrible with patience. After that one second of pause the gambler guided him onwards by the elbow which clutched the fiddle. Burly, brutally heavy of shoulder under a soiled and ragged check shirt, the blind man walked with gentle steps, feeling his way ahead with little motions of his violin-bow held out in front of him.

The woman turned away with not quite a sigh, not quite a blush.

" Thank you very much," she said.

" Oh, not at all," he said. " But don't you think it's now considerably past the time for introductions ? My name is Shannon —Andrew Shannon."

With a visible effort, she swallowed.

" Sara Milford," she said, her voice making music of the syllables. She added firmly " Mrs."

And as if suddenly safe again behind that respectable little word, she was looking at him with haughty detachment.

As the *New World* blew her warning whistle with a boiling tower of blue steam high in the evening air, the masses of stage coaches were beginning to pull out ; most of them empty for the barns, some of them jammed and burdened for the long night roads into the hills. The great six-horse hitches were wheeling, turning, lining out into a gallop, or plunging and backing for room—and through the dust, picking his way fastidiously, came a tall and courtly man of middle-age, clothed in the sombre richness of broadcloth and fine linen. Passing, he lifted his stovepipe hat to Mrs. Milford, and she returned his bow.

" Do I have to kiss you again for that one ? " Shannon asked.

" It is not necessary," she said coldly.

He thought what an odd assortment of men were mysteriously interested in this woman's journey, but after a moment he heard her explaining this one at least :

" I would have introduced him if he had stopped. He's Judge Corder, from New York State, and he has come out here to establish

a law practice. He lives in the boarding house where I stayed for a while in San Francisco."

The smooth grey face under the stovepipe hat did have a judge-like quality, learned in benevolent thought except for the bitter mouth. A thin ruined line, which one could imagine opening as thoughtfully in a sentence of death.

With the wharf partially cleared, Shannon saw his wagon coming. For a short time he and Rafael, the elderly horse-wrangler, were busy loading the freight. When they lifted the woman's trunk to put it on the wagon, it was startlingly heavy. They drove through the deep soft dust of the streets until Shannon pulled up in front of an hotel.

" This is as respectable as any," he said.

" I'm afraid I must have my trunk," she said.

So he and Rafael got it off the wagon again, lugged it into the hotel and finally up the stairs to a room which the goateed and dandified clerk showed them.

" I'm staying just down the street," Shannon told her. " In half an hour I'll be back to take you to supper."

He saw Rafael and the wagon safely started for the public corrals on the outskirts of town, before he went to his own hotel.

When he and Mrs. Milford sat in the dining room of her hotel, it was apparent that she meant it to be a social occasion. As she questioned him, he found himself talking easily about his horse-breeding venture in the foothills of the Sierras. The stage coach lines of California, he explained, were buying horses from the East. By the time they were driven overland they cost as much as four thousand dollars a team, in Sacramento. He planned that when his ranch was in full production he could sell for half of that, or less.

But he knew she was thinking about something else, something that was worrying her.

" Look here," she said. " On our trip, do you think there's any danger from this new highwayman that everyone is talking about ? "

He shook his head. " He wouldn't bother with us. We're just ranch folks."

But like everyone else who was travelling just now, he was uneasy. Up where the Concord coaches spun glittering dustily through the oak-dotted hills of grass, or higher still along the shoulders of great blue-shadowed pine canyons, this new fear was on the roads. Twice in the past month a hooded figure had struck with a calculated cold ferocity of murder wholly at variance with the rough stand-and-deliver tactics of the usual stage coach robbers.

This man, using a rifle, had shot from ambush among boulders or heavy brush—picking off first the shotgun messenger on the high-swaying box beside the driver, and then one of the galloping

lead-horses. When the horse went down, dragging its mate with it as the swing-horses and the wheelers piled up in a threshing tangle of legs and falling bodies, the road-agent would step out of cover with his rifle cocked again. From each careened coach he had taken only the express company's strong box. In each case this had been found chopped open and empty within a mile of the robbery. The two boxes had contained a total of nearly thirty two thousand dollars in dust from the creeks.

Mrs. Milford said, " I suppose it's foolish to be worried. But I have some—some valuables in my trunk. If you want the truth, that's why I asked to go along with you. I could see—well, that you're a gentleman—and it occurred to me that a wagon of freight would be safer than a stage coach these days."

" It probably is," he said.

" Well, I do feel safe, cooking for you," she said with a faintly mischievous smile. " It's—it's so unspectacular."

But as he left the hotel, after she had gone up the stairs to her room, he saw the seedy gambler slouching off into the shadows of the street, away from the front windows.

In the morning at the corrals, Mrs. Milford climbed up lightly into the wagon-seat, picked up the reins, and watched quietly while Shannon and Rafael hazed out through a corral-gate the sixteen mares which they had herded up from south of Monterey.

By this time the mares were trailwise so they had little trouble getting them out of town. Once, as his stock-pony loped easily beside them, Shannon looked back and saw the wagon following, a long way behind. Out in the open grass country they slowed the bunch down to graze, giving Mrs. Milford time to catch up. Her green travelling dress, with its full, beautiful skirts, was already showing the dust of the road; but the morning sun positively blazed on her red hair where it was not covered by her small and stylish hat.

If they had had only the herd of mares, they could have reached the Feather River in three camps. But now, with the heavy freight wagon on the primitive road, they had to travel slowly. Often enough Shannon would walk his horse lazily beside the wagon, talking with Mrs. Milford. At sunset they would camp well off the road in some timbered creek-bottom, and in wood-smoke and starlight they would listen to the night-song of water over its gravel bars.

She turned out to be a good cook; he thought he would always remember her flushed and lovely face bending over the fire while with one hand she held back her heavy skirts. He and Rafael helped with the camp chores, and they rigged a tarpaulin to make her a

crude tent. Every night they put her trunk in it for her. As the firelight ebbed, while Shannon sat smoking his evening pipe and listening to the slow *tonk* of the lead-mare's bell over where Rafael slept among the horses, the peace and silence of this new country crept in close round the edges of their camp. He might see, without meaning to, the vague glimmer of a white arm inside the open tent as she brushed her long hair, and he could hear her soft feminine rustlings as she undressed and crept into her blankets. He would knock his pipe out and lie looking up at the stars until the sleep of the outdoors came silently as an owl's wing.

But it was the days, the springtime days of travelling through the open country and into the hills, that would remain forever in his mind with the colours of sunshine and green grass and wild flowers —and the low, clear sound of a woman's voice. Often in the morning Rafael with the grazing mares would be far behind the wagon; sometimes, with a short cut, he would be a long way ahead. To the burdened creak of the unhurried wheels, the plod of his horse's hooves walking beside her, they talked of all manner of things: but she never said anything at all about herself. And he did not ask. Four times a day they would have to haul the wagon off the road to let a stage coach pass.

The morning that they were breaking up their third camp, Rafael stepped very close to Shannon while they were saddling their horses. He murmured:

"*Señor*, do you know that we are being followed?"

"Tell me," Shannon said.

"Two days since, early, when I was far behind, a mare broke away and started back, the way we had come. She is the wild one, with the white forefoot. There was a campfire, still warm. Yesterday I myself went back and looked again. Always behind us there is a campfire."

"I will go," Shannon said. "Say nothing to the lady."

Rafael gave a dry, elderly bow; and moved his horse a little away as he tightened the girth.

Shannon took Mrs. Milford with the wagon out on to the road and got her well started, then rode to the hills, which were patched with woods.

Remembering the lie of the country immediately behind them, his plan was to ride, cutting for sign, a couple of miles away from the road. He loosened his rifle in its boot beside the saddle.

He had gone about a mile when, crossing a small meadow of grass and wild flowers, the suddenly pointed ears of his horse told him that there was something in the woods ahead. If he had been seen—he shrugged to himself. He continued to ride casually as if

looking for a strayed mare, his horse walking deep through blue lupins and then into a brilliant orange acre of Californian poppies.

Inside the grove he sighed with relief and was just about to dismount for a careful stalk ahead. But where an oak-bough swept low across the top of a grey boulder he saw the glint of a levelled rifle-barrel, and a quiet voice said :

" Sit still, Shannon."

Above the rifle-barrel thrust through the clumps of oak leaves was a slouch hat, its brim pulled so far down that nothing was visible except a pair of steely grey eyes. The lower part of the face was behind the leaves.

" Who are you ? " Shannon said.

" Express company detective," the voice said curtly. " You were hunting me ? Well, you've found me. Now I want to talk to you."

" What about ? "

" Those stage robberies, Shannon."

" You're crazy. I don't know anything about them."

There was a pause. Somewhere among the trees a jay was making shocked and strident outcry, warning all the wild creatures.

The voice said, " We think maybe you're all right, Shannon. But you're certainly travelling in bad company."

" What do you mean, mister ? "

The steely eyes were watching his face. The voice said, " In the bottom of that woman's trunk is the gold from those two stage robberies."

Shannon opened his mouth slowly, and then swallowed.

" I don't believe— How do you know ? "

" Her trunk was searched in her boarding house in San Francisco. It's there, all right. In japanned tin boxes wrapped in heavy paper and sealed with purple sealing wax."

Shannon thought for a minute.

" How do you know that I'm all right ? " he said.

" Our people have checked with *Marchand and Company*, your agents. You were in their San Francisco office ordering your supplies on the day of the first robbery, and they have papers you signed for those sixteen mares of yours in Monterey the day after the second robbery. That information about you caught up with me by one of yesterday's stage coaches. It probably clears you. Marchand himself vouches for you absolutely. That's why I'm talking to you, not shooting."

" If the gold is in my wagon, then who is the robber ? "

" We don't know," the voice said slowly. " But the gold is leading me to him."

Shannon said :

" Are you sure it's the right gold ? "

" Yes. We know."

" You opened a box when you searched her trunk ? "

" And resealed it. We know."

" You know from other reasons, too ? "

" Yes. Definite reasons. It's the gold from the robberies."

" Well," Shannon said. " I—I don't understand it."

" Neither do we, entirely," the detective said. " The killer who robbed those two stages got the gold down to San Francisco, probably in his saddlebags. There, for some reason or other, he gave it to this woman to transport back up to the creeks for him. That trunk is going to be in sight until that unknown man shows up to get his packages."

" Then ? "

" Then we'll find out," the voice said grimly. After a moment, it added, " How far did she ask you to take her, Shannon ? "

" To the forks."

" Well, if you'll listen to my advice, you'll amble back to your outfit and say nothing. Get rid of her and the trunk as quickly as you can. That's all Shannon. Better get started."

The oak leaves had not stirred, the rifle-barrel had not wavered. Shannon turned his horse and rode away.

Dropping down out of the hills again, he overtook the wagon at a long swinging gallop. He reined in, and for a while walked his horse in silence at the left front wheel.

Once or twice he glanced sideways at the serene figure on the jolting wooden seat. And for the first time in his life he realized that the phrase " sick at heart " was more than a mere figure of speech. It meant an actual, dull sickness just under the throat.

Suddenly her eyes met his, with merry and gentle companionship, and then with a dawning question. He asked bluntly, " How did you happen to come to California ? "

" I'm treasure hunting," she said. With a smile shadowing her lips, she added, " In my case, it's a reasonably definite treasure."

" Will you tell me about it, please ? " he said quietly.

" Yes, Andrew."

Something inside of him winced, and then shrank. It was the first time she had ever used his first name.

" Of course I'll tell you," she said. " I'll tell you all about myself. I want to."

Swallowing, he managed to say, " Treasure ? "

" It's my husband's mining claim. Apparently a fairly rich one," she said. " And somewhere about, there's supposed to be a hidden cache of dust and nuggets."

" I do want you to know about me, Andrew. For some reason," she said, and blushed ever so faintly. " Listen. I was a music teacher, in Boston. I gave singing and piano lessons to the most select young girls. Well, I was poor and lonely and I ran away with the son of one of the families where I taught. His name was Jack Milford. We were married late at night in a minister's house in Concord."

Her fingers tightened on the reins and the near horse of the wagon-team tossed its head nervously.

" Jack was just plain no good," she said. " Money, other women —all sorts of things. I left him before we'd been married a year, and went back to teaching. Then I heard that he had left for California, in the gold rush. That was four years ago, in 1850. I had two letters from him, and he told me he'd struck it."

" Where is he now ? " Shannon said, very still.

" Well, I got a third letter, from a friend of his in the diggings, among the creeks of the Feather River. This friend, named Amos Bradley, said Jack had been working hard, taking out a lot of dust and nuggets, and hadn't been to town for six months. And then Jack got killed in a pistol-fight.

" Anyway, the letter said there must be six months' gold hidden somewhere, and the claim was very rich. So, I sold the house my parents had left me and bought a passage on a Californian clipper. I didn't know then that mining claims are jumped the minute a man dies or goes away, but maybe I can get it back and anyway I'm going to look for Jack's cache of gold dust.

" I told you, Judge Corder lives in the boarding house where I stayed in San Francisco and he found the location of Jack's claim for me. I believe that in his law practice he has some connections with one of the express companies, and he was able to find out for me that Jack didn't have his gold dust on deposit in any office. He says it must be hidden in the woods somewhere near Jack's cabin.

" So now you know all about me, Andrew. And I'm glad you do."

And then, almost wistfully, she said, " I've thought that if I don't find the gold cache I can always teach music in San Francisco."

" Probably," he mumbled, and spurred his horse.

He stayed with the herd all morning ; and only towards noon did he let the wagon approach so they could stop for their dinner by the roadside. While she cooked over the smoky fire, she kept trying odd bits of cheerful conversation, but he seldom answered ; and when they sat down on some flat rocks with their plates, the three of them ate in silence. After watching his half averted face

for a long time, little by little her head bowed and finally she just sat looking down at her hands holding the spoon and the plate of food on her knee.

Swinging into the saddle, he started the mares going again and kept them ahead until the sun, sinking behind the hills to the west, made long shadows across the grass.

They were in rocky, lava country by now, and approaching the big pines. Tomorrow they would strike the Feather River canyon. The creek where they camped was mountain water, white and talking among its boulders. The fire burned high with resinous wood from a dead pine, and by its flaring light he and Rafael carried her trunk into the tarpaulin tent while Mrs. Milford, without a word, opened the grub box and began getting out the utensils for supper.

Leaning against a tree Shannon heard a slight gentle cough, and turned his head to see the tall, precisely black and white figure of the judge standing at the edge of the firelight.

Smiling courteously, the judge said, " I'll take my packages now, Mrs. Milford."

The woman looked up from the open grub box.

" Oh—of course," she said in a surprised voice. " Er—Judge Corder, this is Mr. Shannon."

The two men bowed formally to each other across the space of firelight. The judge turned again to Mrs. Milford ; and Shannon casually and idly hooked his thumbs in his gun-belt. With his hand within dropping distance of the pistol-butt, he waited.

The judge said, looking at the woman with grave concern, " Through my legal connections with the express companies I've learned facts which lead me to believe that the packages will be safer with me, now." His voice was judicial and kindly from long practice. He was carrying a leather saddlebag over one arm, but he kept his other hand in his coat pocket. " So I came to find you," he said, " and relieve you of the responsibility here, instead of meeting you at the forks."

" Then I didn't do wisely to take a freight wagon ? " Mrs. Milford said. " I thought—"

" Very wisely. But it wasn't enough," the judge said.

" Oh—I knew I was being followed, and watched. In San Francisco, for several days after you left for Sacramento. And on the boat, coming up the river. Well, I'm glad to be rid of the care. Too many people are interested in those gold pieces of yours ! "

She walked towards the tent. As she stooped to enter it, Shannon's hand slid downwards. Under their shaggy brows the judge's eyes switched instantly from the woman to that faint movement in the shadows.

Shannon knew that with one more flicker of motion he would

have to receive a shot from the pocketed hand in the black frock-coat. Quietly, he said, " This is it, Corder."

The good oily-feeling weight of his own pistol was coming up fast as a stab of dirty orange flame tore through the fabric of the judge's coat pocket. Perhaps the aim was hurried, firing not from coldly careful ambush but straight into the glittering equality of another gun—Shannon felt only the tiny death-wind of the slug past his ear as he shot. The judge's black coat jumped at the left shoulder, as if an invisible hand had slapped him there, jarring his second shot wild. With the triple echo vaulting and rocketing among the hills, Shannon had a quick and terrible glimpse of Mrs. Milford.

Whirling at the entrance of the tent with horrified, stricken eyes, she had fumbled out of some hiding place at her breast a stubby Derringer, the toy-looking deadly little pistol that gamblers could carry concealed, and it was pointed waveringly at Shannon. But the glimpse he had was of her gun falling unfired to the ground, and Mrs. Milford suddenly burying her face in her hands. In a blurred haze of speed and firelight and horror the judge's shirt-front was a moving white target, Rafael was diving spryly for the darkness, but pulling a knife ; and close behind Shannon a rifle spoke once, and authoritatively.

The judge half turned, in the gesture of a man remembering something to say over his shoulder, and shrank suddenly in the huddling humility of the dead. He lay with his right hand still in his coat pocket.

" All right, Shannon," said the voice. " You're both cleared."

It was the fiddler who walked out into the firelight. But he wasn't blind—the black glasses were gone, and his were the steely grey eyes which had watched from behind the oak leaves.

From the other side of the camp came the seedy gambler, who grinned at Shannon saying, " You can certainly handle a gun, mister," and went to stand looking down indifferently at the judge.

The fiddler leaned his rifle against a tree and walked over to stop in front of the woman at the tent.

She dropped her hands hopelessly. But she didn't look at the fiddler. She was staring at Shannon.

" You. Andrew. A bandit. With these men," she said tonelessly. " A thief and a murderer." Then she did look at the fiddler. " All right, you know where they are," she said. " Are you going to kill me, too ? "

" Gold pieces ! " the fiddler said softly. " Is that what Corder told you ? "

Some gentleness in his voice caught her attention sharply. " Who are you ? " she whispered.

" We're express company detectives, ma'am," he said. From his pocket he took out a deputy sheriff's badge, and showed it to her. " We're deputized in Placer County, to give us public authority. Gold pieces ? "

She nodded, her eyes enormous. " For a business transaction in the camps. He said that with the robber on the roads they would be safer in a woman's trunk. He had been kind to me. He was my lawyer."

" And sometimes one of the company's lawyers. That's how he was able to find out when the big shipments were coming down. He's the stage robber, ma'am," the fiddler said, " and you haven't got gold pieces in your trunk. You've had the raw gold from those robberies for two weeks."

But Shannon was standing beside her, and after a moment she just put her head on his shoulder. She said nothing—only a long sigh, half a sob, and a convulsive shiver as she looked at her gun lying on the ground.

" This road-agent didn't get rid of the express company bags until he got to San Francisco," the fiddler said. " Then some kids playing out in the yard behind that boarding house found where someone had burned the bags. In the brush of a vacant lot, probably at night. One of the bags was not quite burned up, and the kids had been reading about the robberies. So we knew it was someone in that boarding house. We got the landlady's keys, searched everything little by little, as we could, and found the gold."

" I knew my trunk had been searched," she said faintly. " You didn't fold the clothes up as neatly again. And then I began seeing you everywhere, whether you thought I noticed or not. Even on the boat, fiddling and passing the hat. Th-that's why I made you kiss me, Andrew. I thought they were robbers after the judge's money. I told you I was utterly desperate. I was—I was ! I was afraid to take a stage coach alone. I was frightened to death."

" It's all right now, ma'am," the fiddler said. " But I still can't see why he wanted to get the gold back up to the creeks."

Even more faintly, she said, " I think I can. He was to meet me at the forks, and we were going up together to my dead husband's claim, to look for a big cache of gold dust. Judge Corder had my power of attorney, to act for me in the matter of recovering the claim."

" Ah," the fiddler said. " So that's it. He could tell you the cache had been found—by him—and he would think he had a way to get all that holdup gold to the San Francisco mint. I'm afraid you would have disappeared very shortly after that, ma'am."

He turned away and went slowly over to join his partner, the gambler. Rafael came out of the shadows, and stood looking down too.

Mrs. Milford—Sara—left Shannon's side abruptly and went into the tent. When after a moment he followed her, she was on her knees in front of the opened trunk. He knelt with her, and their hands touched on one of the heavily sealed packages, under her belongings.

" Well," he said, " are you still going to look for your husband's gold dust ? "

" Oh, Andrew," she said. " I never want to see or hear of gold again. That is, for quite a while."

Their fingers were motionless on the package, but touching each other. " How about teaching music ? " he said.

She wouldn't look at him, but he thought her lips deepened ever so little at the corners. " Music got me into a lot of trouble at one time, too," she murmured.

" How about cooking ? "

" You've never seen me cook on a real stove, Andrew," she said.

* * *

REFRAIN

I wish the old-fashioned *Refrain*
Would come into favour again :
The *heigh-and-a-ho*
Was a help with the dough,
The *lillibullero's*
Increased the dineros,
The *nonny's* and *ninny's*
Augmented the guineas
Without overtaxing the brain
Or marked inspirational strain.

I submitted some lines in this vein.
The verses were brief and quite plain
But the *hey-ding-a-ding*
Was a whale of a thing—
About thirty *to-whu's*
Forty *Hark's !*, eight *tereu's*,
Cock-a-diddle-dow's, chimes . . .
All *da capo*, nine times—
The Editor wasn't profane,
Merely terse. Just one comment—" *Refrain !* ".

JUSTIN RICHARDSON

FASHION PLATE

Of Peacock Pie when life was fine and dandy

Would you be a man of fashion?
Would you live a life divine?
Take a little dram of passion
In a lusty dose of wine.

If the nymph have no compassion,
Vain it is to sigh and groan:
Love was but put in for fashion,
Wine will do the work alone.

Author Unknown, 1680

By the Way

He was dressed in a fine flowing, olive-green frock (made like a dressing-gown), with a black velvet collar, having a gold embroidered stag on each side, gilt stag-buttons, with rich embossed edges; an acre of buff waistcoat, and a most antediluvian pair of bright yellow-ochre buskins, made by White, of Tarporley, in the twenty-first year of the reign of George the Third; they were double-lashed, back-stitched, front-stitched, middle-stitched, and patched at both knees, with a slit up behind. The coat he had won in a bet, and the breeches in a raffle, the latter being then second or third-hand. His boots were airing before the fire, consequently he displayed an amplitude of calf in grey worsted stockings, while his feet were thrust into green slippers.

ROBERT SMITH SURTEES, 1803-1864
Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities

Come Follow

In the morning the hostess should be down before her guests, and be ready to read prayers at the appointed time, if the host, as is frequently the case, should be late.

At a reception the clever hostess's motto should be the metropolitan policeman's "Keep moving!"

For Uncles, Aunts, Nephews or Nieces, crape mourning is not worn, but plain black, with jet, for three months.

When Dining Out, take soup noiselessly, and do not be too *slow.*

From The Glass of Fashion and
The Manners of The Aristocracy

Pirouette

" That dark woman," said Jinny, " with high cheekbones, has a shiny dress, like a shell, veined, for wearing in the evening. That is nice for summer, but for winter I should like a thin dress shot with red threads that would gleam in the firelight. Then when the lamps were lit, I should put on my red dress and it would be thin as a veil and would wind about my body, and billow out as I came into the room, pirouetting. It would make a flower shape as I sank down, in the middle of the room, on a gilt chair."

VIRGINIA WOOLF, 1882-1941, *The Waves*

Converted

In the second yeere of Queene Elizabeth, her silke woman, *Mistris Montaque, presented her majestie for a new yeere's gift, a* paire of black knit silk stockings, *the which, after a few dayes wearing, pleased her highness so well, that she sent for Mistris Montaque, and asked her if she could help her to any more; who answered, saying, " I made them very carefully of purpose onely for your majestie, and seeing these please you so well, I will presently set more in hand." " Do soe (quoth the queene) for* indeed I like silke stockings so well, because they are pleasant, fine and delicate, that henceforth I will wear no more *CLOTH STOCKINGS " —and from that time unto her deathe the queene never wore any more* cloth hose, *but onely silke stockings.*

JOHN STOW, 1525-1605, *Annales*

Bespoke

Upon my way from my father's tailor, Anthony Marcelis, of Suffolk Street, Charing Cross, I met in the street a dashing fellow in a scarlet frock, with black waistcoat, breeches, and stockings, which in my eyes appeared remarkably smart.

I therefore returned instantly to the tailor to bespeak a similar dress, as I was then in mourning for my mother.

Marcelis suggested an improvement, which was to have the coat lined with black silk, and black buttons and buttonholes, which not only looked better than the plain red, but was more appropriate.

The first time I appeared in my scarlet and black, I committed a sad solecism in dress by wearing my military sword. Of this error I was unconscious until told of it by a young man who perfectly understood the etiquette of dress, and he said I was very wrong—that the sword should be black, with a sword love-knot of black.

WILLIAM HICKEY, 1749-1830, *Memoirs*

Cuckoo !

Many men to fetch over a young woman, widows, or whom they love, will not stick to crack, forge and feign any thing comes next, bid his boy fetch his cloak, rapier, gloves, jewels, &c., in such a chest, scarlet-golden-tissue breeches, &c., when there is no such matter ; or make any scruple to give out, as he did in Petronius, that he was master of a ship, kept so many servants, and to personate their part the better, take upon them to be gentlemen of good houses, well descended and allied, hire apparel at brokers', some scavenger or prick-louse tailors to attend upon them for the time, swear they have great possessions, bribe, lie, cog and foist how dearly they love, how bravely they will maintain her, like any lady, countess, duchess, or queen ; they shall have gowns, tiers, jewels, coaches, and caroches, choice diet.

The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales
The brains of peacocks, and of ostriches,
Their bath shall be the juice of gilliflowers
Spirit of roses and of violets
The milk of unicorns, &c.

ROBERT BURTON, 1577-1640, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*

Well, Who'd Have Thought . . .?

When woman escaped—not so very long ago—from the position of being purely man's chattel . . . she saw that there was one obstacle that must be mastered if she were to retain her position of apparent equality. And that obstacle was—man's astounding physical beauty.

It was essential for her to give man the impression, at all costs, that she was even more beautiful than he. And the generations have produced an amazing state of affairs. In the first place they have produced an industry, or rather a colossal combination of industries, whose sole activities are devoted to trying to make out that women are more beautiful than men. Industries producing frocks, hats, gloves, shoes, scents, cosmetics, powders, and jewels ; . . . frocks that deceive and allure and entice, hats that bewilder, paint that heightens, jewels that sparkle, perfume that intoxicates—all these are brought into the preposterous contest. Even in his ugly clothes a man cannot conceal his beauty . . .

STACY AUMONIER, 1887-1928, *Essays of Today and Yesterday*

Much Money

This morning come home my fine Camlett cloak, with gold buttons, and a silk suit, which cost me much money, and I pray God to make me able to pay for it.

SAMUEL PEPYS, *July* 1, 1660

CHANNEL CROSSING

Thousands of hundred franc notes, a million beef sandwiches winked up from the tattered newspaper

by DANE CHANDOS

I JOINED Abbie in Paris in June, to stay for several weeks. But, five days after my arrival, she said:

"I have just spoken on the telephone to Arthur. Everything is in chaos. Both the pekes are unwell, so are my penstemons, and all the servants are perpetually taking French leave. Do you mind if we leave tomorrow?"

The next morning Abbie decided that she just had time to pop along to Hermes before making for the Gare du Nord. She wanted to order a new compact. She said it would only take a minute since the design was quite clear in her mind. She had planned a small extra compartment, to take the scrap of soap she always carries to apply to runs in her stockings.

Abbie explained to the assistant with great clarity exactly how the compact was to be made, of what shade of white gold, and where the diamond monogram was to go. She made the assistant sketch the whole thing on a writing pad and then she produced a big blue pencil and corrected his sketch. He asked twice what the new compartment was to be used for, but Abbie told him to mind his own business.

"But if we knew what Madame desires to keep there, we could execute it more to the satisfaction of Madame . . ."

Abbie didn't see it.

"Do as I have instructed you and I shall not complain," she said. The assistant glanced at the sketch of the compartment, and then he glanced at Abbie and me, and over his face there stole a soft smile of Latin understanding, a smile which on a northern face would have been a leer.

Abbie didn't pretend not to understand. She leaned over the counter and socked him.

She was a good customer, and there were no consequences, except that she knocked a thousand francs off the estimated cost of the compact. On her way out she gathered up a few sheets of note-paper from a writing table provided for the use of clients. Exhilarated by these exercises, she whisked through the business of getting us

and our luggage to the station and aboard the train in no time, sent off a telegram to reserve a cabin on the cross Channel boat and another to tell Arthur she would be home for dinner, undertipped the porters, changed her seat for the third time, and then looked round with an expression that plainly indicated the train might now start. It did.

We ran into Calais practically on time, and Abbie set about getting her things on to the boat. She always has a vast quantity of baggage, the serviceable items from John Pound and the fancier ones from Vuitton. Every piece is numbered, and bears a stick-on label, a tie-on label, and a metal address tag, none of which overlap. Several bear instructions for their correct handling, written in operative languages and Indian ink block capitals on large white labels. And from every piece stare out the huge letters A.A., which ensure her being at the head of any alphabetical list.

Halfway up the ramp to the boat she called, to nobody in particular, " Officer, where will the exit gangway be placed ? "

She counted the bags in French, insisting that the three porters should agree with her count, and had them stacked as near as possible to the exit. Then she gestured to the eldest porter, unlocked and zipped open her canvas kit bag, and found, without a moment's hesitation, a ball of red twine. Estimating by eye the necessary length, she cut it with the little scissors from her gold bracelet, put away the ball and closed and locked the kit bag, and threaded the twine through the handles of all the bags but one.

" That clumsy hold-all is American and unlikely to be purloined," she said, and tied the thread in an expert and complicated knot.

Then she chose the steamer chairs, three of them—" Then if anyone we know should pass, we can ask him to sit down, if we wish "—making sure that they were in working order and rejecting one with soiled canvas, and proceeded to consider where they should be placed.

" Seaman," she called, " from which quarter is the wind coming ? "

He told her. But she took a porter over to the rail, moistened her finger, and held it up and made him do the same.

" That sailor was quite wrong," she said. " One would think these people would be better fitted for their duties."

She had the chairs set up.

But now the porters were clamouring that they must leave at once or the boat would start with them on board. Abbie opened her bag, but just then her eye was caught by a flag at the end of the quay. Its flutter seemed to indicate that perhaps the sailor had been right. She hurried over to the rail. The porters, now desperate,

hurried after her, all talking at once. But they were too late, for the boat was already in motion. Abbie took no notice of them. She was shouting to a small boy who was standing at the end of the quay.

" *Attention !* Tell me from where the wind is blowing ! "

She fluttered her handkerchief, making vigorous gestures to show the boy that he should flutter his. But he merely gaped.

" Poor little fellow, perhaps he hasn't got a hankie. The French are so lax about details of ordinary hygiene. That's why so many of the children pick their noses," said Abbie, staring hard at the porters. " Now you will be able to see our white cliffs of Dover," she added. " I will tip you when we arrive."

She settled herself in her chair, took a light jaeger thigh bag out of the kit bag, and put her legs into it. At this point she began to take " deep breathes," as she says, pronouncing breathes to rhyme with seethes. They were very deep and not one was skimped. About twenty minutes passed, and as we left the French coast behind the wind freshened and the boat began to buck a little.

" Steward ! " called Abbie. " Kindly go to the bar and bring me some champagne. A half-bottle of *Monopole* 1928, and a tumbler. We'll have a loving cup, darling boy."

We had the champagne, which Abbie beat vigorously with the little swizzle stick from her bracelet, and then I went to sleep. When I opened my eyes we were in mid Channel and the seas were coming crosswise, short and vicious, with a slap to them.

" I have had a disagreeable altercation about the price of the champagne," said Abbie. " Don't let me forget to have Arthur complain to the company. Damn and blast, I cannot abide seeing people being sick. Come along."

She climbed out of the thigh bag and stood up, leaning expertly against the wind. We went to the purser's office.

" Have you a cabin free ? " asked Abbie.

The purser studied his chart.

" There was one reserved by wire from Paris this morning," he said. " Name of Abbot-Acland. But it's not been claimed. Number Seven."

" I will take it," said Abbie. " As we are a little more than halfway across, I presume you will charge me half price."

Outside she waved and shouted at our three porters, who were huddled shivering by the rail, but they remained unresponsive.

" All the French have weak stomachs," said Abbie.

She shouldered the kit bag, gathered up her jewel case and everything else, and strode swiftly to Cabin Number Seven. Once inside, she got a duster out and dusted all our things, which were gritty from smoke. She repainted her face and affixed a new mouche—" I have never called it a beauty spot, dear boy, for that

is a term applied to scenery." We settled down again, and Abbie resumed taking " deep breathes."

Through the open door we saw a Frenchman approaching, his beret pulled down to his eyebrows.

" *Monsieur !* " called Abbie. " *Monsieur !* I remember seeing you on the train."

She asked him to count her bags as he went round to the other side of the boat. He swept her with a rapid glance, from her Parisian face-do to the tip of her Pinet shoe. He bowed and smiled. In a few minutes he was back.

" *Merci, Monsieur,*" said Abbie, " Seventeen is quite correct."

The Frenchman hovered about the door, hoping, perhaps to be asked to come in and sit down.

" *Merci, Monsieur,*" repeated Abbie firmly; she closed her eyes and concentrated on her breathing.

As we approached Dover, the French porters came for their tips. We were not yet into harbour, and the wind boxed our ears as we stood by our things, as near as possible to the exit gangway.

" You have had a good healthy blow," said Abbie, " and I will have you each sent from the station restaurant a nourishing sandwich of solid English beef, such as you have never tasted in your lives." She opened her bag. " That is all the French change I have left," she said, handing it to the eldest porter. " These coins with the holes in them are issued by the Chambre de Commerce of Nantes, and you can use them in Nantes, should you go there. I shall not forget the sandwiches."

As soon as faces could be distinguished on the quay, Abbie began to look for a porter she knew.

" Number Ninety seven. Not that one could see his badge yet. A stocky man, not unlike Lord Bunket," she remarked.

With the usual delays, the boat swung alongside the quay and was tied up. Abbie pressed against the rope that was stretched round the exit.

" A.A.," she said to every seaman and officer. " A.A. comes first. A.A."

Suddenly she opened the kit bag, produced two big labels bearing the letters A.A., licked them briskly, and stuck them on my two bags.

" A.A.," she chanted. Even between licks she had said A.A. once or twice. " A.A., A.A.—There he is ! One-o-three ! One-o-three ! No, he isn't the one I mentioned, but I know him too. One-o-three ! A.A. ! "

The porters crowded aboard, and Abbie grabbed One-o-three, who showed signs of escaping to another passenger.

" And one other. You and one other," she said firmly. " Two Englishmen can easily manage as much as three Frenchmen. Take no notice of those Americans, for British passports come first ; you can attend to foreigners later."

When we reached the customs house the crowd was milling there, but Abbie, inches shorter than anyone else, forged through it, continuously intoning, " A.A., A.A., A.A.," on a low husky note that penetrated rather than rose above the hubbub. We found the bags in a neat row on the rack. But Abbie was not satisfied that they were in the most strategic position for early attention, and they all had to be moved to the farther end. All the time she was saying, " A.A. Take care. A.A. *Prenez garde.* A.A.," and once, when a traveller she took to be a German approached, she said " *Achtung* " too. " A.A. A.A. A.A."

An Automobile Association agent came spearing through the crowd towards her. Abbie was gratified.

" Though had I had the car with me, you can be sure I should have been looking for him in vain."

As soon as the luggage was ranged to her satisfaction and other people had been elbowed out of the way, she produced a big silver key ring and unlocked all the bags. This done, she tapped on the rack with the largest key.

And when a customs man was still some distance off, she cried, " Inspector, I have a certain number of things to declare ! "

And the moment he reached her and showed her the printed list of dutiable goods, she waved it away and announced, " I know the law, Inspector ; I have already told you I have a number of things to declare. All my bags are unlocked, should you wish to inspect them, but all dutiable goods are in these two here."

The inspector immediately began to rummage in another bag.

" I must warn you, Inspector," said Abbie, screwing in her monocle, " I know the law, and if you disarrange those things they must be replaced as found. That dress you have in your hand—take care, if you please—you will see it bears Molyneux's name, but Molyneux of London, not of Paris. How careless these people are, darling boy. One would think they'd employ a better type of man for this job. That, Inspector, is a simple preparation of ultramarine blue, such as perhaps your wife uses to blanch the linen she washes, but which I employ on my hair. And that, yes, I believe to be a French nightdress. No, I did not buy it this visit. Had I done so it would be in one of those two suitcases which I told you contained all the dutiable goods. Of course I can prove it. In the first place, it is soiled. And in the second, my husband can produce a receipt

of duty paid one year ago any time your superiors may wish to see it."

The inspector put back the nightdress, very carefully folded, but there were grim lines at the corners of his mouth. He went at the bag like a terrier. It didn't take him long to come up with a box of half a dozen French tennis balls. Abbie snorted.

" Can you not see those are used goods ? I played two sets with them myself at Neuilly, so I should know. Dutiable ? How can they be dutiable ? I must warn you, Inspector, I am not accustomed to being tricked by servants of the taxpayers. I shall most certainly not pay for them. You may present them to the poor of Dover."

Now the inspector reached the two cases Abbie had pointed out to him. She fell silent, and the atmosphere about her bleakened. No doubt the temperature dropped a degree or two. She looked down her nose, but she had to pay through it, as silks and satins were checked against the receipted bills she produced. And then the inspector brought out a vast bottle of perfume.

" You can see for yourself," said Abbie, " that it has been opened, and that a considerable quantity of it has already been used."

About one-sixth had gone, but there was left a great deal more than she was permitted to bring into the country. She poured scent on to handkerchiefs, over clothes, over such of her bags as were not made of leather, and then she sprinkled a number of women standing near.

" I don't see that Frenchman who was on the boat. Frenchmen use scent. So wise."

But still the inspector was not satisfied. And at last Abbie poured *Chanel* perfume on to the floor and went on pouring until there remained no more than she could legally bring in duty free.

" Waste is wicked," she said, snapping the keys in their locks.

As we approached the exit she stared defiantly at the customs inspector stationed there. When we had passed through the gate she smiled at me.

" Had he discovered the dresses I have on under my suit, darling boy, he would have found in each the label of the London Molyneux."

It took some time to go to the restaurant, choose the suitable size and price of the porters' sandwiches, and find a messenger to take the package back to the boat. On the wrapping paper, Abbie wrote in French : *Please give the fourth sandwich to the small boy who was standing on the end of the quay when we sailed. Give it to him, not to his mother.*

When we reached the platform, our train had left.

" Damn and blast, it didn't whistle," said Abbie, not at all perturbed. " I shall send a wire to Arthur to advise him we are

delayed. We can go by the next train. Darling boy, you look tired. I know a little place close by the station where they make a good cup of tea. I'll just pop along, send the wire, and tell the porters to wait, and then we'll go straight there."

On the tea table were a few postcards advertising the *Lord Warden Hotel.* Abbie used them to send to friends in France, and asked for some more to take with her in case she wished to write one on the train.

" Now you sit here and rest, darling boy," she said. " While here, I'm just going to bob out and buy a sound Dover sole for dinner."

Her step as she went out of the teashop dragged a little, but when she came back it was again resilient. .

" Look," she said, unwrapping some newspaper. " I went down to the beach and got them straight from a fisherman. They'd have cost me a shilling more in London."

It was now time to go to the station, and we caught the train comfortably. That is, with plenty of time to rearrange the bags several times, so that the right ones were on top and right ones at the bottom of each pile, and to make quite sure on which side of the compartment we should be facing the engine.

" I like to see where I'm going."

On the run to London Abbie knitted furiously, only taking time off to tell the ticket collector that the carriage had not been properly dusted.

" See for yourself, Inspector," she said, running her finger along a ledge and showing it to him. " There's money to be made, darling boy, selling vacuums to the Southern Railway on commission. I know a seller's market when I see one."

Arthur was waiting at Victoria. He hadn't received Abbie's second telegram, and he had been there in time to meet the boat train. He had kept his taxi waiting the whole time, and he was not out of temper.

" Do you mean to say you didn't even tell him to turn off his meter ? " said Abbie. " You've been learning extravagant ways. Darling boy, aren't you very uncomfortable sitting in the middle ? "

In the hall of their flat Abbie picked up a pile of letters and leafed through them as she moved into the sitting room. She dropped a few letters into a big Chinese vase, changed the position of a chair, made slight re-arrangements to two bowls of flowers, and, still walking about the room, began to take off her things, dropping them here and there.

" Don't fuss me, Arthur," she said, stepping out of a tweed skirt and shaking out the silk dress beneath it.

Arthur was busy with a sherry decanter at the other end of the room.

" And Butler hasn't kept the telephone messages properly," she went on, stripping off a blue dress to reveal a green one. " But never mind, here I am, home at last. And so are you. Come and kiss me all over again. How much have you missed me ? "

She went to the table where the fish lay beside her jewel case, and opened the case. I stared in horror. For the case was empty. My mind reeled, thinking what Abbie would do and say about that. In a little silence I waited, stricken, for the tempest. But Abbie calmly peeled off the green dress, and a silk blouse under it. She stood there in her petticoat, and round her neck were the seven rows of pearls, the diamond necklace, the great sapphire pendant. On each arm blazed a vambrace of bracelets. She pulled up from between her breasts a wash-leather bag which spilled earrings and clips. In a leisurely way she began to unsnap bracelets. Waterfalls of diamonds and rubies lay beside the fish and on the fish. Thousands of hundred franc notes, a million beef sandwiches winked up from the brine-soiled newspaper.

" I consider, Arthur," she was saying, " that the Southern Railway is making an exorbitant rate of profit on its champagne. I think you should—" She paused suddenly, a green flame of emeralds in her fingers. " Or do we hold stock in their company ? "

* * *

TECHNICAL HITCH

The owner of a high-powered car was being driven along at a steady forty five. For some time the hooting of a baby car had irritated him.

" Accelerate," he said to his chauffeur.

The car jumped from forty five to sixty, but still came the steady honk-honk of the baby car.

" Give her all she's got," said the owner of the big car.

His chauffeur stepped on the accelerator, and the speedometer was soon flickering between seventy five and eighty. But still the honk-honk persisted.

" Pull up," said the baffled owner.

The big car stopped, and the baby car drew up just behind.

" Look here ! " yelled the angry owner, " do you want to pass ? "

" No ! " shouted the man in the small car, irritably. " I just wanted to get my starting handle out of your luggage grid."

PORTRAIT OF INNOCENCE

"There must be," he said sternly, "no affair of the heart"

by MICHAEL FESSIER

IT was late at night, and I was sitting alone in my studio in Chelsea. The door bell rang. Although I had been expecting this for frightful hours of suspense, I had not decided what to do when it happened. I think that I had been inclined towards ignoring the summons and pretending that I was not at home.

The sound came a second time, with the spine-chilling effect of a rattlesnake's warning. Slowly I approached the button which would release the latch of the front door four floors below. I knew that delay would merely prolong my apprehension. I hesitated for only a moment before I pressed the button that would open the door to the dread thing that awaited me.

I heard the faint creaking of boards far below, as footsteps started up the uncarpeted staircase. I turned from the door and stared unhappily at my portrait of Angela. In the shaft of moonlight from the skylight above, the painting seemed almost alive. Angela was there in the picture, naked, not as a mature woman might be, but with the unashamed and innocent nakedness of a child.

It seemed to me that the eyes of the portrait were seeking mine and that the lips were forming the remembered words, *You must go. You must leave town. You must never try to see me again. My father knows !*

" Angela," I whispered, " but what about you ? Angela darling, where are you—"

For a moment the silence of the studio mocked me. Then from below there came again the creaking of a stair board and the barely audible sound of footsteps. I stood there in the centre of the room and my memory went back over the months to the day when I had first seen Angela . . .

Her eyes—and of those eyes you shall hear more later—stared out at me from one of a group of photographs I had been examining in an agency which provided models for artists.

" This one," I said. My hands grew tense as I held the photograph. " Who is she ? "

" Angela Mattelone," answered the woman who managed the agency. " I wouldn't recommend her. As a matter of fact, I've considered removing her name from our files. There's a certain amount of family supervision when she works, and the artists resent it."

I insisted on meeting Angela, and an appointment was made for the next day at my studio. I remember with what excited anticipation I listened to the sound of footsteps on the stairs, one set ponderous and deliberate and the other light and tripping, as if someone were dancing. I opened the door and for the first time saw Angela in the flesh.

She stood before me in a simple white dress that enclosed her young body like the outer petals of a bud that is about to burst into bloom. The whiteness of her skin was accentuated by eyes of an intense shade of blue, and her lips, without the aid of cosmetics, were scarlet. Her face was framed by hair as black as jet and as fine as the strands of a spiderweb. The only thing to do was to take both her hands in mine, as I did, and gently lead her into the studio.

The heavy, deliberate footsteps followed us. Angela's father, Matteo Mattelone had accompanied her. He was a huge, broad shouldered man with a fierce moustache and a mane of iron-grey hair. Despite his formidable appearance, there was no unfriendliness in the slow, appraising look he gave me.

" Does the child please you ? " he asked. " Is she of the type you wish to paint ? "

" Yes," I said. " Yes, indeed. I would feel honoured—she's so beautiful."

Matteo turned to Angela. " I would like a private word with this gentleman," he said, and very gently touched her shoulder and sent her towards the door.

She flashed me a quick smile, then turned and walked meekly out of the door.

Matteo lowered himself into a chair, and with a gracious wave of his hand, extended to me the hospitality of my own studio.

" Angela," he said after a long pause, " is but eighteen years old, and her beauty is not only of the surface—it is of the soul."

" I can well believe that," I said. " As a matter of fact, I was considering—"

This time his upraised hand was a command to silence.

" Angela," he said, " is not like other girls. She is dedicated." There was a gleam of pride in his eyes. " She has the voice of an angel, and one day, after the proper training, that voice will belong to the world."

" Opera, of course," I said.

" Of course," Matteo said. " She will be a prima donna! To sing in opera is one of God's greatest gifts to mortals. To earn this gift, one must sacrifice many things that ordinary mortals hold dear. One must lead a life of complete austerity. Until maturity has been attained and the voice has ripened and set, and success has been achieved, one must have no affair of the heart."

" I assure you," I said, " that my interest in your daughter is purely impersonal."

He appeared not to have heard me, for he gazed steadily at me and continued to speak.

" One of the pleasures of life that one must forego," he said, " is sin."

" If my integrity is in question," I said, feeling rather foolish, " perhaps it would be better for all of us if I used another model."

Again he appeared not to have heard me.

" Angela's mother," he said, " was Angela's age when I met her. I, like you, was an artist. She was a student of voice. She had a voice of such purity and beauty as to make all the saints in Heaven weep. *But I desecrated her gift; I destroyed that voice.* If her father had been a man of character, he would have beaten me. Instead, he forced us into marriage. But that didn't repair the sin. My wife never sang again. She didn't even have a lullaby for our daughter Angela."

He paused for a moment, and then spoke with agonized intensity.

" That is why Angela must sing," he said. " With her voice I can repay the creative world what it lost in my wife. That is Angela's destiny, and nothing must interfere."

" Considering the austere life you've planned for your daughter," I said, " it strikes me as peculiar that you would even consider allowing her to serve as an artist's model."

" Since the day I married Angela's mother," said Matteo, " I haven't put my hand to a brush. I'm a fisherman now, and Angela's musical education is beginning to cost more than I can earn by myself. Remember, too, that I was once an artist. I understand what a boon her beauty is to a painter. It would please me greatly if she were to inspire a work of art. I admire your work, sir, and this admiration inspires trust."

Suddenly the brown eyes turned red, burning like coals, and I realized that Matteo Mattelone was possessed by an obsession that wouldn't let him rest.

" But," he went on, " if you betray that trust in the slightest degree, all the saints in Heaven won't spare you from my vengeance."

" A moment ago," I said, " I tried to tell you that the portrait

I intend to do of Angela is to be called ' Innocence.' The decision came to me the moment she entered this room. That, Mr. Mattelone, is the only emotion she inspires in me."

His expression grew calmer, and he smiled as he rose and shook my hand. He asked about the hours when I would want Angela to be at the studio, and then he departed. As I listened to the sound of his footsteps descending the staircase, I felt a premonition of fear. But I was so eager to paint Angela that I paid no attention to that feeling of doom.

The next morning when Angela entered my studio, she put both her hands round mine, pressed them warmly and spoke with childish eagerness.

" I'm so glad Papa let me come," she said. " We've both admired your paintings so much. I think I'd rather have you paint me than any painter who ever lived, except Titian."

" Titian, being dead," I said, " inspires no feeling of competition in me."

She flitted about the studio, examining some of my canvases and exclaiming over them.

" You do nudes beautifully," she said. " Are you going to do me that way ? "

" Hardly," I told her. " I had hoped to, but since then I've had a talk with your father."

She laughed. " Oh, Father," she said. " He thinks I'm a child, and he's sure dreadful things will happen to me if he isn't careful. You misunderstand him. Father says that sin is not in the thought or opportunity or temptation, but in the deed. You forget, also, that he once was an artist. I have his permission to pose in the nude if you wish."

For the first time during my career as an artist, I was seized with prudishness. There was a mocking, amused light in the girl's eyes that made me tense. I said nothing, but merely waved my hand towards the dressing room. Angela walked lightly behind the partition that concealed the dressing alcove. There was a low, musical humming of infinite sweetness from behind the partition. A dress, a white slip and finally two stockings were hung over the top of the alcove's low, wooden wall.

Angela walked from behind the partition and confronted me with a sight of such loveliness and innocence that I was ashamed of my unaccountable bashfulness of the moment before. Angela was naked only in the pure classical sense of a statue or a child. All my emotions concerning her became one—I burned only with the desire to transform her to canvas, and I lost no time in beginning a preliminary sketch.

Time ceased to exist for me as I sketched. It seemed that the charcoal travelled over the canvas of its own volition. Finally I stood back and stared at the sketch, and the feeling I experienced must have showed in my face.

" What's the matter ? " asked Angela. " Something wrong ? "

" Your eyes," I said. " There's something in them that eludes me, an expression I can't seem to capture."

" I'm so sorry," said Angela. Her tone was one of a child who's done wrong.

" Oh, you little darling," I said impulsively. " It isn't you. It's a lack in me. But it's not important. Charcoal's an inadequate medium for this purpose. Next time we'll try oils."

" Have you finished then for today ? "

" Yes, by all means," I said. " You must be tired."

" I never tire of being thought beautiful," she said as she walked towards the partition. " Isn't that horrid ? "

" Of course not." I smiled. " You're lovely enough to be conceited, even to be arrogant. You're—"

She gave me a quick, mischievous look and laughed suddenly.

" I'm a little darling," she said, and disappeared behind the partition.

When she emerged, clad in her street clothes, there were footsteps in the hall and a knock at my door. I opened it and found Matteo Mattelone standing in the entrance. He nodded gravely to me and led Angela away.

My next session with Angela was late in the afternoon. Again two sets of footsteps sounded on the staircase, but the other set was not heavy and slow like Matteo Mattelone's. It was a light tread, almost as light as Angela's own steps. I opened the door to admit Angela and a man. He was thin and fair, with features that were almost feminine.

" This is Signor Alfio, who teaches me voice production," said Angela. " He is a great admirer of your work, and he wanted to meet you."

" I am flattered, and you are welcome, Signor," I said.

When he entered, his almost colourless eyes looked not at me but about the room.

" I am honoured," he said in stiff tones.

He walked over to the charcoal sketch I had made of Angela, studied it for a long while and then turned and looked directly into my eyes. For a moment his expression was one of malevolent hatred. The look passed, and Signor Alfio bowed stiffly to me.

" I will not keep you from your work," he said. " I am honoured to have met you. I will go now."

He walked through the door, closed it with a loud bang and his

light, quick footsteps sounded down the stairs.

" Signor Alfio," I said to Angela, " had a little trouble disguising his affection for me."

" Oh, Alfio ! " she said and laughed. " He's a funny person."

She walked behind the partition, and when she reappeared her beauty was so startling that I felt an emotion akin to a stab of pain through my heart.

" I would guess," I said, after I had begun to paint, " that Signor Alfio is perhaps jealous."

" Alfio ? " she said, and then giggled. " Oh, you're mistaken there, my friend."

I began to paint and became so engrossed in my work that it was some time before I grew conscious of the low humming. The humming grew louder and more musical, and then it seemed as if the studio were filled with a strange, radiant light as Angela burst into song.

I don't believe that anyone has experienced more of the sense of beauty than I did then. Angela stood before me in her innocent nakedness, her voice as clear and pure as water cascading from a crystal mountain spring. I put down my brush until the song ended abruptly. Angela gazed at me then with a contrite expression.

" I'm sorry," she said. " Sometimes I can't help singing. Did I disturb you ? "

" Your father was right," I said. " You sing like an angel."

" That's what Signor Alfio says, too," said Angela. " It seems that I'm beautiful and that I sing like an angel and I should consider myself a lucky girl, except—"

She paused, and a look of sadness darkened her eyes.

" Except what ? " I asked.

" Nothing," she said.

She shook her head, and her eyes were a sunny blue again. She was like a spring day made all the brighter by a brief change of temperature.

As the days passed, I began to treasure my brief time with Angela. The lovely body I was creating on canvas seemed to glow and pulse with a life that was as chaste and as pure as the voice with which Angela occasionally sang as I painted.

After a while, Matteo Mattelone ceased to call for Angela. There was something in Matteo's expression when I met him that told me his mind was at peace, that he trusted me. But as time went on, I began to wish that he would call for his daughter and that he would keep closer surveillance over her.

I was becoming increasingly afraid of the emotions I felt towards Angela.

I was coming to the part of the portrait that I had deliberately delayed until the last. I began to paint Angela's eyes. After an hour of work, I threw down my brush with disgust and spoke angrily to her.

" Your eyes," I said. " What are you doing with them ? "

" My eyes ? " she repeated.

" Yes, your eyes," I said. " There's something that eludes me. There's a fleeting expression that comes and goes. What are you thinking ? "

Her lips trembled and her eyes filled with tears. She had the appearance of a child unjustly chastised.

" I was thinking that I'm tired and that you're angry with me. I'm sorry. I don't want to make you angry."

" I'm sorry, too," I said. " I suppose I'm tired. Perhaps if we went out and had a cold drink—"

" Oh, let's," Angela said eagerly. " There's a funny little place up the road where they serve a drink made of claret and fruit juices and some sort of powder that makes it all bubble. Papa takes me there sometimes."

On the pavement, Angela held my hand and skipped along beside me like a happy child. Near the place she had mentioned, there was a small jewellery and antique shop, and in the window was a necklace of heavy gold with a rather large, badly cut ruby pendant. Angela stopped and tugged at my hand. Her eyes widened as she stared at the necklace.

" Oh," she gasped, " isn't it magnificent ? "

" It's rather gaudy, and I imagine that stone has flaws," I said. " Do you really like it ? "

" I've never had anything like that," she said. " Papa doesn't believe in jewellery."

In her eyes and her voice was the wistfulness and yearning of a girl who has been denied too many things by an austere life.

" I would like to buy it for you," I said. " But your father—"

Again Angela was a child in her innocent yearning for the necklace. I didn't think that she was even considering the cost of it or that she felt her ensuing remarks were out of place.

" But he needn't know," she said anxiously. " Even if he saw it I could tell him that it was just jewellery from the cheap shops. Do you really mean you would buy it for me ? "

There was nothing for me to do then but disregard my better judgment, take her into the shop and buy the necklace. She insisted on wearing it immediately. As we continued our walk, the heavy gold seemed out of place on her delicate neck and the ruby pendant

rested on her bosom rather awkwardly. She reminded me a bit of a child masquerading in adult attire.

The place she had mentioned turned out to be a bar, so dingy and disreputable that I was amazed at the thought of Matteo Mattelone escorting his daughter there. From across the room I was hailed by an artist acquaintance, and to keep him from coming over to join us, I rose and went to him.

When I returned, a man was sitting at the table with Angela. He was a swarthy, thin young man with oily black hair. As I stepped up, he was reaching for Angela's hand and murmuring something.

I caught but one word. That was, " Babee."

" Angela," I said, amazed at the fury that possessed me, " did you ask this young man to sit here ? "

Angela was staring at the stranger, and despite my anger, I noticed a look in her eyes that momentarily startled me. Then she turned to me and shook her head to say, " No."

Quietly, I asked the man to leave—and to emphasize my point, I put my hand on his shoulder. He jerked away from me, leaped to his feet and faced me, his lips drawn back and his face enraged.

" I am Turridu Aruzuba," he said, " and no man lives who can insult me."

He made a motion as if to spit on me, and I hit him on the point of the chin with my fist. The blow knocked him to the centre of the floor, where he lay for a moment before getting to his feet.

" You are one of those men who think that a quarrel is settled with a blow of the fist," he said finally. " But our quarrel will be settled with a knife, and it will be settled where and when I decide. Look for me, my friend, in unlighted alleyways. Listen for my footsteps on the dark pavements."

Angela was tugging at my hand.

" Come," she was saying in a frightened voice. " Let's leave."

She was still terrified when we returned to the studio. There was a strange look in her eyes, and she was breathing heavily as she faced me.

" If he'd touched me and my father had heard of it, he would have killed him," she said. " My father really would kill any man who'd touched me."

And then, with that fear in her heart and those words on her lips, she came to me—and I knew then that I held not a girl but a woman in my arms.

What happened after that convinces me that hell and Heaven are neighbours and that there is a territory between the two where the exquisite joy of one is mingled with the awful agony of the other.

Afterwards, I was tortured by shame and remorse and self-hatred. I stared at Angela.

" Forgive me," I said.

She looked at me gravely for a moment, and then her eyes filled with a sort of sad amusement.

" What a way to talk," she said. " I love you. Don't you feel some of what I do ? "

" I love you," I said. " I love you terribly. We shall get married, of course."

" In time," she said. " But not now. Father would suspect, and he'd harm you if he did. Besides, I have to think of my singing."

She came over to me and placed her hands on my cheeks and shook my head playfully.

" But in the meanwhile, darling," she said, " why look so sorrowful ? Love is not a time for sadness. It's a time for happiness. Look at me. Has anything happened to me ? Am I not still beautiful ? Do I not still sing like an angel ? " She lifted her voice gaily in song.

I placed my hand over her mouth. " It's late," I said. " People will wonder and talk. And I've been wondering—what will you tell your father ? "

" I'll tell him nothing. Tonight is the night I stay with an aunt who's an old pet and who loves me and never asks any questions."

Shortly after Angela had left the studio, I was walking along a darkened pavement, still trying to quiet the voice of conscience that raged and railed at me. Soon I began to notice footsteps in the background—heavy footsteps that seemed gradually to be overtaking me. I remembered Turridu and his threat, and a surge of fear came over me as I whirled round.

Out of the darkness came Matteo Mattelone, and my new fear was so great that it made me weak. I pressed my body against a wall in order to keep standing. Matteo came closer and peered at me.

" Ah, it is you, my friend," he said. " Out late."

" Yes," I replied, watching his huge hands as they went into his pocket. " I couldn't sleep."

" Angela—" said Matteo. " I trust she got off to her aunt's in good time. It isn't safe for a girl to be on the streets at night."

" She got off in good time," I said.

He pulled a cigarette and a match from his pocket, lighted the cigarette and puffed for a moment.

" Good," he said as he started on. " Sleep well."

I went back to my couch in the studio. The remainder of the night droned on for a century, but still I failed to sleep.

I was shaken and ill the next morning when Angela came in like a gust of spring air and kissed me on the lips. She was humming

gaily as she went behind the partition. When she appeared before me, she was still as innocently and chastely naked as a child.

" I'm sorry I didn't tell you," I said, " but there is no further need for you to pose in the nude. It is only the eyes I want, now."

" What difference does it make ? " she asked, laughing at me. " It's a hot day, and I'm comfortable this way. Darling, don't look at me that way. I love you."

" Do you think I'm inhuman ? " I asked. " Do you think I can stand here and paint you as if you were a statue, and not think of the long years that stand between us and marriage, if we're to wait through your training ? "

" I love you," she repeated. " Isn't that enough ? "

It was not enough, but it was more than I deserved. To be the sole beloved of the beautiful Angela was more than any man had a right to expect.

Both because I wanted her near me and because my task was extremely difficult, I spent two weeks painting Angela's eyes into the portrait. At times I enjoyed the ultimate in bliss because of Angela's presence and the knowledge that she loved me.

I consoled myself with the thought that, even though the wait would be long, someday she would be mine in the eyes of the world. At other times I suffered from a feeling that I was guilty, despite all my rationalization, and that someday payment would be exacted.

Throughout this time, I still had trouble in capturing that elusive look in Angela's eyes. The expression in them was no longer transitory, but it was baffling and incongruous. Time after time, I painted what I saw and yet couldn't interpret in terms of personality. I would scrape off the paint and try again, and always the result was the same. After my final attempt, I was observing my work with a renewed feeling of frustration and anger when Angela came and stood beside me and stared at the canvas.

" It isn't you," I said fiercely. " It isn't you at all, Angela."

" Oh, yes, it is," she said and turned away from me. " Someday you will understand, my darling."

She left me soon after that. That evening her frightened voice came over the telephone.

You must go. You must leave town. You must never try to see me again. My father knows !

I had spent hours of fear and indecision and inaction. Now the familiar, heavy footsteps were coming up the staircase.

" Flee ! " the portrait of Angela seemed to say.

" Angela," I cried, " where are you ? "

The footsteps reached the landing and crossed the hall, and there was a loud knocking in the night. I rose and slowly approached

the door, dreading what I was about to do, but moving with a resolution that I couldn't control. I reached the door and flung it open.

Matteo Mattelone loomed in the doorway, then brushed past me and came into the room. He glanced about the studio and finally turned to me.

" Angela isn't here ? " he asked roughly.

" No. Why should she be ? "

He sank into a chair and buried his thick fingers in his bristling mane of iron-grey hair.

" The golden voice is stilled," he said in his old-fashioned way. " Who knows in what part of hell it will be heard ? "

" Angela," I cried. " What's happened to her ? "

" She's disobeyed me openly—her rebellion's complete."

Although I knew that Matteo knew, an instinct still prompted me to try to maintain the useless lie.

" Not Angela," I protested.

" Understand," Matteo said almost gently, " that I have examined my own soul and that I freely accept my part of the blame. But the man, I will never forgive. The life I planned for Angela was too austere. She had a feminine lust for finery, and I denied it to her.

" How was I to know," he continued, " that she would descend to accepting such things from a man, that she would be brazen enough to stand before me and exhibit the necklace and then almost convince me that she'd bought it cheaply at a sale ? "

I remembered the necklace with the ruby pendant. I remembered how I had disliked it but still had bought it. I knew I was defeated, but I held to the lie. " Perhaps she did," I said. " But in any event, what proof have you of the charges you're making against your own daughter ? "

" I had the necklace appraised," said Matteo. " When I showed Angela my evidence, she admitted her sin and she named the man ! "

His eyes, burning with hatred, looked into mine. I knew then that to maintain the lie was useless.

" And now," I said, " what do you propose to do to this man ? "

He laughed and rose from the chair. " What more could one do to him ? " he asked. " He is dead."

" Who's dead ? " I gasped.

" That Turridu," said Matteo. " And may his soul descend through eternity into an infinity of hells."

Although the situation had taken on the quality of a nightmare, I instinctively cried out against the injustice.

" No," I said, " it wasn't Turridu."

" It was hard for me, too, to believe that she'd consorted with

someone of his character," said Matteo. " But when I confronted her with the necklace with the diamond pendant—"

" *Diamond !* " I said. " A diamond pendant ? "

" Yes," said Matteo. " A diamond pendant. I went to the studio where Signor Alfio was teaching her voice production and confronted her with the necklace before him. Angela confessed, and she named the man."

Then I began dimly to comprehend how terrible and lasting a thing retribution may be. The life I had risked to love Angela had been spared, so that throughout the years I could be tortured by the knowledge that she had duplicated that love with someone else.

" Dear Lord," I cried. " Dear Lord. It isn't true."

" All too true," said Matteo. " When he realized that he faced death, Turridu boasted of his conquest. He boasted of it with his dying breath."

" It's an injustice that you should suffer for his death," I said quietly. " I'd gladly have killed him myself."

" Ah," said Matteo looking up at me, " I didn't explain that to you. That's the final irony. Signor Alfio, who treasured Angela's voice above life itself, avenged himself against the man who probably has silenced it forever."

But Matteo was wrong. Angela's voice was not silenced. She sings today in famous music halls all over the world, and I am told that her voice has a soft, velvet quality that appeals especially to men.

I wouldn't know. I haven't heard her sing since those days in the studio. All I have left to remember Angela by is a portrait of a girl who is chastely naked as a child is naked, but whose eyes are the eyes of a wanton.

* * *

BEING TRANSLATED ?

A Presbyterian Minister, called on at short notice to officiate at the parish church of Crathie in the presence of Queen Victoria, was so transported by the glory of the occasion that he burst out with the prayer :

" Grant that as she grows to be an old woman she may be made a new man ; and that in all righteous causes she may go forth before her people like a he-goat on the mountains."

Quoted in PRAYERS AND GRACES

THE MONSTER

"It was a mistake," he said, "a hideous, world shattering mistake!"

by NELSON BOND

ONE nice thing about the Press Club is that you can get into almost any kind of argument you want. This night we were talking about things unusual. Jamieson of the *Clarion* mentioned some crackpot he had heard of who thought he could walk through glass. Bob Andrews of the *Morning Call* had a wild yarn about the black soul of Roderick Dhu, whom Nova Scotians claim still walks the moors near Antigonish. Then a fellow named Joe brought up the subject of Ambrose Bierce's invisible beast.

You remember the story? About the diarist who was haunted and pursued by a gigantic thing which couldn't be seen? And who was finally devoured by it?

Well, we argued about that one for a while and Jamieson said the whole thing was fantastic; that total invisibility was impossible. Joe said Bierce was right; that several things *could* cause invisibility. A complete absence of light for one thing, he said. Or curvature of light waves. Or coloration in a wavelength beyond that of the human eye's visual scope.

Bob Andrews said, "Rubbish!" and Dick Peters, who was getting a little tight, hiccoughed something to the effect that "There are more things in heaven and earth Horatio than are dreamt of in your philosophy—" and then got into an argument with the bartender who said his name *wasn't* Horatio.

I said nothing, because I didn't know. Perhaps that's the reason why this stranger, a few minutes later, moved over beside me and started talking.

"You're Hawley, aren't you?" he asked.

"That's me," I agreed. "Philip Hawley—chief errand boy and reporter for the *Daily Blade*. You've got me, though, pal. Who are *you*?"

He smiled and said, "Let's go over in that corner, shall we? It's quieter over there."

That made it sound suspicious, but I liked something about this fellow. Perhaps it was his face. I like tough faces; the real McCoy, suntanned instead of sunlamp browned. Perhaps it was

the straightness of his back, the set of his shoulders. Or it could have been just the way he spoke. I don't know.

Anyway, we moved to the corner table. He ordered and I ordered, and we just sat there for a moment, staring at each other. Finally he said, "Hawley, your memory isn't so good. We've met before."

"I meet them all," I told him. "Sometimes they're driving Black Marias, and sometimes they're in them. Mostly they're lying in the mortuary, with a pretty white card tied to their big toe. Or, perhaps . . . Hey!" I said, "you're not Bill Patterson who used to write for the *Canesfield News*?"

He grinned then.

"No, but you're warm. I'm Bill Patterson's brother, Keith."

"Keith Patterson!" I gasped. "Hey . . . you're not going to get away with this." I climbed to my feet and started to shout to the others. "Hey, everyone—"

"Don't, Philip!" Patterson's voice was unexpectedly sharp. There was a note of anxiety in it, too. He grabbed my arm and pulled me back into my seat. "I have very good reasons for not wanting anyone to know I'm back . . . yet."

I said, "But look here, Keith, you can't treat newspapermen like this. These men are your friends."

Now that he had told me who he was, I could recognize him. But the last time I had seen him—the only time I had ever met him, in fact—he had been dressed in khaki shirt and corduroy breeches, and had worn a flying helmet. No wonder I hadn't known him in civvies.

I remembered that night, two years ago, when he and his expedition had taken off for the exploration trip to the Maratan Plateau in upper Peru. The primary purpose of the trip had been scientific research. The Maratan Plateau is one of the many South American spots as yet unexplored. It was Keith Patterson's plan to study the region, incidentally paying expenses by "bringing back alive" whatever rare beasts zoos would buy.

For a few weeks the expedition had maintained its contact with the civilized world. Then, abruptly . . . silence! A month . . . two months . . . passed. No word or sign from the explorers. The government sent notes to the Peruvian high-ups. Peru replied in smooth, diplomatic terms that intimated we should have kept our pesky adventurers in our own front gardens.

The plight of the lost expedition was a nine-days' wonder. Then undeclared wars grabbed page one. And the National Air Registry scratched a thin blue line through the number of pilot Keith Patterson and wrote after his name, "*Lost.*"

But now, here before me in the flesh, not lost at all, but very much alive, was Keith Patterson.

I had so many questions to ask him that I began babbling like a greenhorn reporter on his first assignment.

"When did you get back?" I fired at him. "Where's your crew? What happened? Did you reach the Plateau? And does anyone know you're—?"

He said, "Wait, Philip. All in good time. I haven't told anyone I'm back yet for a very good reason. *Very* good! As for my men—" He stared at me sombrely—"They're dead, Phil. All of them. Toland . . . Fletcher . . . Gainelle . . ."

I was quiet for a moment. The way he repeated the names was like the tolling of a church bell. Then I began thinking what a story this was. I could almost see my name under the headlines. I wanted to know the rest so badly I could taste it.

I said, "I'm sorry, Keith. Terribly sorry. But, tell me, what made you come here tonight? And why all the secrecy?"

"I came here tonight," he said, "searching for someone I could trust. I hoped no one would remember my face . . . for it *is* changed, you know. I have something to tell so great, so stupendous, that I hardly know how to present it to the world. Or even . . . if I should.

"I liked the way you kept out of that silly argument a few minutes ago—" He motioned to the bar, where a new conversation was now in progress—"because you obviously had an open mind on the subject. I think you are the man whose help and advice I need."

I said, "Well, that's nice of you, Patterson. But I think you overrate me. I kept quiet just because I'm stupid about scientific things. Ask me how many words to a column inch, or how many criminals were caught after the last crime wave, but—"

"You're the man I'm looking for. I don't want a man with a scientific mind. I need a man with good, sound commonsense." He looked at his wrist watch. "Phil, will you come out to my home with me?"

"When?"

"Now."

I said, "Gosh, Keith, I've got to get up at seven tomorrow. I really shouldn't—"

He leaned over the table, stared at me intently. "Don't stall, Phil. This is important. Will you?"

I stood up.

"My hat's in the cloakroom," I said. "Let's go."

Patterson's cottage was a rambling sort of place, some miles off

the main Holbury road. It was easy to see how he could come home to it, open it up, and still not let anyone know he had returned. As we drove, he cleared up a few points for me.

"I didn't return to England on a regular liner. I had reasons for not doing so; reasons which you will understand in a short time.

"I hired a cargo boat, a junky little job, from an obscure Peruvian port. Pledged the captain to secrecy. He landed me and my . . . my cargo—" He stumbled on the word for a moment—"at a spot which I'm not at liberty to reveal. Then I opened up the cottage.

"That was just two days ago. I wired my brother Bill to come immediately. But he—"

"He's working on a job in Ireland," I said.

"Yes. The soonest he could get here would be tonight. He may be at the cottage when we arrive. I hope so. I'd like to have two witnesses of that which I am going to show you."

He frowned. "Perhaps I'm making a mistake, Phil. It's the damnedest thing you ever heard of. Perhaps I ought to call in some expert, too. But . . . I don't know. It's so utterly beyond credibility, I'd like you and Bill to advise me first."

I said, "Well, what the hell is it, Keith?" Then I suddenly remembered a film I'd seen some years ago, based on a story by H. G. Wells. "It's not a . . . a monster, is it?" I asked. "Some beast left over from prehistoric ages?"

"No, not exactly. At least, I can assure you of *this* . . . it is not a fossil, either living or dead. It's a thing entirely beyond man's wildest imaginings."

I leaned back and groaned. "I feel like a kid on Christmas Eve. Let's hurry."

There were lights in the cottage when we got there. As Keith had hoped, Bill Patterson had arrived from Ireland. He heard us pull up on the gravel drive, and came to the door. There was a reunion scene, one of those back patting, how-are-you-old-fellow things. Then we went in.

"I found your note," Bill said, "and knew you'd be back immediately. I needn't tell you I'm tickled to death you're safe, Keith. But why all the secrecy?"

"That's what I asked him," I said. "But he's not saying anything."

"It's something," Bill accused, "to do with the old workshop behind the cottage. I know that. I was snooping round at the back there and—"

Keith Patterson's face whitened. He clutched his brother's arm.

"You didn't go inside?"

"No. The place was locked. I say—" Bill stared at his brother curiously—"are you feeling all right, Keith? Are you sure you're not—"

"You must be careful," said Keith Patterson. "You must be very, very careful when you approach that shed. I am going to take you out there now. But you must stand exactly where I tell you to, and make no sudden moves."

He strode to the hall chest, took out three revolvers. One he tucked into his own pocket; the others he handed to us. "I'm not sure," he said, "that these would be any good if . . . if anything happened. But it is the only protection we have. You *might* be lucky enough to hit a vulnerable spot."

"A vulnerable spot?" I said. "Then it *is* a beast?"

"Come," he said. "I'll show you."

He led the way to the workshop. It lay some yards behind and beyond the cottage, a big, lonely sort of place, not quite as large as a barn, but big enough. My first idea was that at some time it must have been used as a barn, for as we approached it I could catch that animal smell you associate with barns, stables, and zoos. Only more so. It was a nasty, fetid, particularly offensive smell. You know how animals smell worse when they get excited? Or when they've been exercising a lot? Well, the place smelled like that.

I was nervous, and when I get nervous I invariably try to be funny. I said, "If they're horses, you ought to curry them more often."

I saw a faint blur in the black before me. It was Bill's face. He said, "Not horses, Phil. We've never kept horses here."

Then we were at the door of the shed, and Keith was fumbling with a lock. I heard metal click, then the door creaking open. Patterson touched a switch. The sudden blaze of light made me blink.

"In here," said Keith. And warningly, "Stay close behind me!"

We crowded in. First Keith, then Bill, then me. As Bill went through the door I felt his body stiffen, heard him gasp hoarsely. I peered over his shoulder—

—Then I, too, gasped.

The thing I saw was incredible. There were two uprights of steel, each about four inches in diameter, deeply embedded in a solid steel plate which was secured to a massive concrete block. Each of these uprights was pierced, and through the eyelets ran a third steel rod which had been hammered down so that the horizontal bar was held firmly in place by the two uprights.

And on this horizontal rod was . . . a *thing !*

That is all I can call it. It had substance, but it had no form. Or, to be more accurate, it had every form of which you can conceive. For, like a huge black amoeba, or like a writhing chunk of amorphous matter, it changed.

Where the steel rod pierced this blob of *thing* was a clotted, brownish excrescence. This, I think, accounted for some of the animal smell. But not all of it. The whole shop was permeated with the musty scent.

The *thing* changed ! As I watched, there seemed to be at one time a globular piece of matter twisting on the rod, an instant later the globe had turned into a triangle . . . then into something remotely resembling a cube.

It was constantly in motion, constantly in flux. But here is the curious part. It did not change shape slowly, as an amoeba, so that you could watch the sphere turn into an oblong, the oblong writhe into a formless blob of flesh. It made these changes instantaneously.

Bill Patterson cried, " Good heavens, Keith, what unholy thing is this ? " and took a step forward past his brother's shoulder.

Keith shouted, " Back, you idiot ! " and yanked at Bill's arm. Bill moved just in time. For as he quitted the spot to which he had advanced there appeared in the air right over that spot another mass of the same black stuff that was captured on the bar. A blob of shapeless, stinking matter that gaped like a huge mouth, then closed convulsively where Bill had stood a moment before.

And now the fragment on the rod was *really* moving. It changed shape so rapidly, twisted and wriggled with such determination, that there was no doubt whatsoever about the sentience governing it. And other similar blobs suddenly sprang into sight. A black pyramid struck the far wall of the shed, and trembling woodwork told that here was solid matter. An ebony sphere rose from nowhere to roll across the floor, stopping just short of us. Most weirdly of all, a shaft of black jolted down through the floor . . . and failed to break the flooring !

That's about all I remember of that visit, for Bill suddenly loosed a terrified yelp, turned and scrambled past me to the door. I take no medals for courage. He was four steps ahead of me at the entrance, but I beat him to the cottage by a cool ten yards. Keith was the only calm one. He took time to lock the workshop door, then followed us.

But don't get the idea he was exactly calm, either. His face wasn't white, like Bill's, nor did his hand shake on the whisky-and-soda glass, like mine. But there was real fear in his eyes. *Rea*

fear, I mean.

The whisky was a big help. It brought my voice back. "Well, Keith," I said. "We've seen it. Now, what in hell did we see?"

"You have seen," said Keith Patterson soberly, "the thing that killed Toland and Fletcher and Gainelle."

"We found it," he continued, "on the Maratan Plateau. For we did get there, you know. Yes. Even though our radio faded on us just after we left Quiche, and we lost contact with the world. For a while we considered going into Lima for repairs, but Fletcher thought he could mend it once we were on solid ground.

"We found a good, natural landing field on the Plateau and began our investigations." He brooded silently for a minute. Then, reluctantly, "The Maratan is even richer in palaeontological data than men have dared hope. But man must never try to go there again. Not until his knowledge becomes greater than it is today."

Bill said, "Why? That *thing* outside?"

"Yes. It is the gateway for that . . . and others like it.

"Some day I may tell you all about the marvels we saw on the Plateau. But now my story concerns only one: the one you have seen.

"Fletcher saw it first. We had left Gainelle tending camp, and were making a field survey when we saw a bare patch in the jungle which surrounded our landing field. Fletcher trained his glasses on the spot, and before he even had time to adjust them properly he was crying, 'There's something funny over there. Take a look!'

"We all looked. And we saw . . . what you saw a few minutes ago. Huge, amorphous blobs of jet black which seemed to be of the earth, yet not quite of it. Sometimes these ever-changing fragments were suspended in air with no visible support. At other times they seemed to rest naturally enough on solid ground. But ever and ever again . . . they changed!

"Afire with curiosity, we went to the open spot. It was a mistake."

"A mistake?" I repeated.

"Yes. Fletcher lost his life . . . killed by his own curiosity. I need not tell you how he died. It was, you must believe me, horrible. Out of nowhere one of the jet blobs appeared before him. Then around him. Then he was gone."

"Gone?" exclaimed Bill. "You mean dead?"

"I mean gone. One second he was there; the next, both he and the *thing* which had snatched him had disappeared into thin air.

"Toland and I fled, panic stricken, back to camp. We told

Gainelle what we had seen. Gainelle, a crack shot and a gallant sportsman, was incredulous ; perhaps even doubtful of our sanity. At his insistence we armed and returned to the tiny glade.

" This time it was as if the *thing* expected us, for it did not await our attack. It attacked us. We had barely entered its domain when suddenly, all about us, were clots of this ever-changing black. I remember hearing Toland scream, high and thin, like a woman. I dimly recall hearing the booming cough of Gainelle's express rifle, and of firing myself. I remember thinking subconsciously that Gainelle was a crack shot. That he never missed anything he aimed at. But it didn't seem to matter. If you hit one of those fleshy blobs it bled a trifle . . . perhaps. More likely than not it changed shape or disappeared entirely.

" It was a rout. We left Toland behind us on the plain, dead. A black triangular *thing* had slashed Gainelle from breast to groin. I managed to drag him halfway out of the glade before he died in my arms. Then I was alone.

" I am not a good pilot even under the best conditions. Now I was frantic, crazy with fear. Somehow, I managed to reach the 'plane. But in attempting to take off, I cracked up. I must bear a charmed life. I was not injured myself, but the 'plane was ruined. My expedition, hardly started, was already at an end."

I was beginning to understand, now, why Keith Patterson had not wanted the world to know of his return. A tale as wild and fantastic as this would lead him to but one spot . . . the psychopathic ward. Had I not seen the *thing* there in the shed I would never have believed him myself.

" And then ? " I asked.

" I think there is a madness," said Keith, " which is braver than bravery. I think that form of insanity seized me then. All I could comprehend was that some *thing*, a *thing* that changed its shape, had killed my companions.

" I determined to capture that *thing* or die in the attempt. But first I had to sit down and work out what it was."

Bill licked his lips. " And . . . and did you work it out Keith ? "

" I think so. But the result of my reasoning is as fantastic as the *thing* itself. That is why I want the help and advice of you two I will tell you what I think. Then you must say what it is best to do."

I poured another drink all round. It wasn't my house or my whisky, but nobody seemed to mind. Bill and I waited for Keith to resume. Keith had picked up, and was now handling with a curiously abstracted air, a sheet of notepaper. As he began, he

waved this before us.

" Can you conceive," he asked, " of a world of only two dimensions ? A world which scientists might call ' Flatland ' ? A world constructed like this piece of paper . . . on which might live creatures who could not even visualize a third dimension of depth ? "

" Yes," said Bill. I wasn't so sure myself, and said nothing.

" Very well. Look—" Keith busied himself with a pencil for an instant. " I draw on this sheet of paper a tiny man. He is a Flatlander. He can move forwards or backwards, up or down, but he can never move *out* of his world into the third dimension because he has no knowledge of a dimension rectangular to that in which he lives. He does not even dream of its existence."

I said, " I see what you mean. But what has that to do with—? "

" Wait, Phil." Patterson suddenly struck the paper a blow with one finger, piercing it. He held the sheet up for our inspection. " Look at this. What do you see ? "

" A sheet of paper," I said, " with a hole in it."

" Yes. But what does the *Flatlander* see ? "

Bill looked excited. " I get it, Keith ! He sees an unexpected, solid object appear before him . . . out of nowhere ! If he walks around this object he discovers it to be crudely round."

" Exactly. Now if I push my finger farther through the hole—"

" The object expands."

" And if I bend it ? "

" It changes its shape."

" And if I thrust another finger through Flatland— ? "

" Another strangely shaped piece of solid matter materializes before the Flatlander ! " Bill's eyes were widening every minute. I didn't understand why, and I said, " I told you I didn't have a scientific mind, Keith. What does all this mean ? "

Keith said patiently, " I have merely been establishing a thought-pattern, Phil, so you can grasp the next step of my reasoning. Forget the Flatlander now. Or, rather, try to think of us as being in his place.

" Would we not, to a creature whose natural habitat is a higher plane than ours, appear much the same sort of projection as the Flatlander is to us ? Suppose a creature of this higher plane projected a portion of himself into our dimension as I projected my finger into Flatland. We would not be able to see all of him, just as the Flatlander could not see all of us. We would see only a tridimensional cross-section of him, as the Flatlander saw a bidimensional cross-section of us."

This time I understood. I gasped.

" Then you think that thing in the workshop is a cross-section of a creature from the—"

"Yes, Phil. From the fourth dimension."

Patterson smiled wanly.

"That is the decision I reached on the Maratan Plateau. There confronted me the problem of capturing the thing. The answer eluded me for weeks. Finally I found it."

"It was—?" Bill was leaning forward breathlessly.

"The Flatlander," said Keith, "could not capture my finger, *ever*, by lassooing it. No matter how tight he drew his noose I could always withdraw my finger.

"But he *could* secure a portion of me by fastening me to his dimension. Thus—" He showed us how a pin laid flat in Flatland could pierce a small piece of skin. "Now, if this pin were bolted securely, the finger thus imprisoned could not be withdrawn.

"That was the principle on which I worked. But my task had just begun. It took months to effect the capture. I had to study from afar the amorphous black *thing* which was my quarry; try to form some concept of what incredible fourth dimensional beast would cast projections of that nature into the third.

"Finally I decided that one certain piece of black matter, occurring in a certain relationship to the changing whole, was a foot. How, it is not important to tell. It was, after all, theory coupled with guesswork.

"I constructed the shackle you have seen. Two uprights with a third that must pierce the *thing*, then lock upon it. I waited, then, many weeks. Finally there came a chance to spring my trap. And . . . it worked."

Bill asked, "And then?"

"The rest is a long and wearisome story. Somehow I found my way to a native village; there I employed natives to drag my captive from the Plateau. We were handicapped by the fact that we could never get too near the trap. You see, it is a *limb* we have imprisoned. The head, with its eating apparatus, or whatever it is, is still free. That is what tried to reach you, Bill, there in the shed.

"Anyway, we made an arduous trek to the coast. As I have told you, I hired a boat. The sailors hated and feared my cargo. The trip was not an easy one. But I was determined, and my determination bore fruit. So . . . here we are."

I said, "Yes . . . here we are. Just like the man who grabbed a tiger by the tail, then couldn't let go. Now that you've got this *thing*, what are you going to do with it?"

"That's what I want *you* to tell *me*."

Bill's eyes were glowing. He said, "Good heavens, man, is there any question in your mind? Call in the scientists . . . the whole damned brigade of them. Show them this thing. You've got the marvel of the age on your hands!"

"And you, Phil?"

"You want my honest opinion?" I said.

"Yes. The truth. That's why I asked you out here."

"Then get rid of it," I said. "Kill it. Set it on fire. Destroy it. I don't know just how you're going to do it, but I do know that's the thing to do.

"Oh, I know what you're thinking, Bill . . . so you needn't say it! I'm a dope. Yes. I'm ignorant. Yes. I don't have the mind or the heart of a true scientist. You're right. But Keith said I had commonsense . . . and I'm exercising it now. I say get rid of that damned thing before something happens. Something horrible that you will regret for the rest of your life."

Bill looked a little peeved. He said, "You're crazy, Phil. The thing's tied down, isn't it? Damn it, man, you're the kind of person who holds back the progress of the world. If you'd been alive in his day, you'd have voted to kill Galileo."

"If he'd trapped a monster like this," I retorted, "a monster that had already killed at least three men, I'd have voted just that way. I'm not superstitious, Keith. But I'm afraid. I'm afraid that when man starts monkeying with the unknown he gets beyond his depth. I say . . . kill it now!"

Keith looked at me anxiously.

"That's your last word, Phil?"

"Absolutely my last." I rose. "And to prove it, I'm going home now. I'm not going to write a damned word about what I've seen tonight. I don't care if this is the best story since the deluge, I'm not going to write it!"

Bill said, "You give me a pain in the neck, Phil."

"Same to you," I told him, "only farther south. Goodnight, fellows." And I left.

I kept my word. All night I was tossing and dreaming about that weird, changing black *thing*, but I didn't put a word concerning it on paper. I half expected to hear from Keith Patterson some time during the next day. But I didn't. The following morning I saw why. The *Call* carried a front page blast, screaming to the astonished world the news that, "*the missing explorer, Keith Patterson, has returned home*," and that tonight there would be "*a convocation of eminent scientists*" at his home "*to view some marvel brought back from the wilds of upper Peru.*"

All of which meant that brother Bill's arguments had proved more persuasive than mine. And that tonight there was to be a preview of that damned *thing*.

I was rather annoyed about it. I thought the least they could have done was to give *me* the chance to write up the story. But

there was no use crying over spilt milk. Anyway, I remembered that Bill's paper had some connection with the *Call.* It was only natural he should route the story that way.

Then I went down to the office, and Foster, our News Editor, called me to his desk.

"Hawley," he said, "I'm going to give you a chance to earn some of that twenty pounds a week we're overpaying you. I want you to represent us tonight out at Patterson's home in Holbury. He's going to unveil something mysterious."

I said, "Who, me? Listen, sir. Give it to Bill Reynolds, won't you? I've got some rewrites to do."

"What's the matter? Does Holbury give you asthma?"

"Foster," I pleaded, "I can't cover this. I don't know anything about science or—"

"What do you mean . . . science?" Foster glared at me. "Do you know what this is all about?"

That stopped me. I didn't want the assignment, but if I ever admitted that I'd known about Patterson's changeable *thing* without being the first to give the story, I would be looking for another job within fifteen seconds. So I gulped and said, "Right, boss. I'll go."

Everybody and his brother was there that night. I recognized a professor of physics, and the society of palæontology from the local University College. Two greybeards from the Academy of Natural History were in a corner discussing something that ended in -zoic, and the curator of the Museum was present, looking only slightly less musty than one of his mummies.

The press was out in force. All the agencies and most of the London papers had representatives there. Bill was doing the receiving. Keith had not yet shown up. I got Bill aside and told him what a skunky trick I thought he'd pulled on me, but he merely shrugged.

"I'm sorry, Phil. But you had your chance. After all, I had to think of my own paper first." Then he grinned. "Anyway, you were in favour of destroying the *thing*."

"I still am," I told him dourly.

"Then why are you here?"

It was my turn to shrug. "It was either come or lose my job," I said. "What would you do?"

Then Keith put in an appearance, and the whole outfit went genteelly crazy. Flashbulbs started blazing, and all my learned confrères started shooting questions at him. About his trip, the loss of his comrades, his experiences. I knew everything, so I just waited for the big moment to follow.

It came at last. The moment when Keith said, " Before I tell my entire story I prefer you to see what I brought back with me." And he led the way out to the workshop.

Bill and Keith had arranged the place a little. They had drawn chalk lines on the floor to show the visitors where they might stand.

" And I warn you," said Keith, just before he opened the shed door, " not to move beyond those lines. Later you will understand why."

The crowd began to file in. From my post in the rear I could tell when the first pair of eyes sighted that *thing* . . . and when every subsequent visitor saw it as well. Gasps, exclamations, and little cries of astonishment rippled through the crowd as one by one they moved into the room.

The *thing* was still suspended on its imprisoning rod. As before, it was wriggling and moving, changing its shape with such rapidity that the human eye could scarcely view one shape before that turned into another. In view of what Keith had told me I could comprehend the *thing* better now. I could understand how, if that black blob of flesh captured by the bar were really—as Keith presumed—the leg of some ultra-dimensional monster, the movements of that limb, as it sought to break free, would throw continually changing projections into our world.

I could understand, too, why from time to time we would see *other* bits of solid matter appear in various sections of the room. Though these seemed disassociated with the chunk pinned on the bar, I knew them to be actually separate portions of the same beast. For if a man were to thrust four fingers simultaneously into Flatland, to the Flatlander these would appear to be four separate objects, while in reality they were part of a single unit in a dimension beyond his powers of conception.

The amazement of the savants was something to behold. I began to feel a little ashamed of myself. Perhaps I had been wrong to give Keith the advice I had. Perhaps, as Bill had said, this was one of the greatest discoveries of all time.

One of the photographers was dropping to his knee, levelling his camera at the shifting *thing* on the rod. I caught myself thinking swiftly, " *He shouldn't do that!* " Evidently Keith had the same idea. He took a swift step forwards, cried, " Please! I would rather you didn't—"

He spoke too late. The man's finger pressed. For an instant the room was flooded with light . . .

—And then it happened. I heard a thin scream that came from far away. Or it may not have been a sound at all in the true sense of that word. It may have been some tonic wave of super-

natural heights, for it tortured the eardrums to hear it.

The thing on the rod churned into motion. Violent motion. It grew and dwindled, shifted from cube to hemisphere, back to cube again. Then a truncated pyramidal form was throbbing, jerking, churning on the steel. Where once I had seen an old, ugly, healed wound, ichor-clotted, now I saw ragged edges of black break open; saw fresh gouts of brownish fluid well from raw edges in that changing black.

Keith's horrified voice rose above the tumult.

"Out! Get out, all of you, before it—"

That was all he found time to say. For there came a horrible, sucking sound, like the sound of gangrenous flesh tearing away, and where there had been a changing black shape swirling on an imprisoning steel rod, suddenly there was nothing.

And with equal suddenness several of the shapeless blobs of matter from various parts of the room seemed to rush together with frightful speed. Someone screaming with terror bumped against me. I fell to my hands and knees in the doorway, feeling the flood of human terror swarm over me.

But not until I had seen a scimitar-shaped blob of black flesh reach out to strike at Bill Patterson. Bill had not even time to cry out. He went down as though stricken by the sickle of Chronos.

I cried, "Keith!"

Keith had turned to face the coalescing monster. A revolver in his hand was filling the room with thunder. Orange gouts of flame belched from its muzzle, and I knew he was not missing. Still the thing was closing in on him.

I saw what seemed to be four jet circles appear in a ring over the head of Keith Patterson. Saw the circles expand and a wider expanse of black, flat and sinister, appear directly over his head. They came together with a clutching, enveloping movement. Then he was gone.

Somehow I managed to struggle out of that shed. Not that it made any difference. For with the disappearance of Keith Patterson, the *thing* itself disappeared.

I won't try to describe the terrified group of reporters and scientists who gathered at the Patterson cottage. Who trembled and quaked and offered crazy explanations for that which had transpired. Who finally summoned up courage enough to return to the shed cautiously, seeking the mortal remains of Keith Patterson.

They found nothing, of course. Bill was there, but Bill was dead. Keith was gone. The air was still putrid with that unearthly animal stench. Beneath the steel trap Patterson had built for his *thing* was a pool of drying brownish fluid. One of the scientists

wanted to take a sample of this for analysis. He returned to the cottage for a container in which to put it.

Perhaps it was the wrong thing for me to do. But I thought, then, that it was best. And I still think so. If he had taken that sample, made that analysis, sooner or later another expedition would have set out for the Maratan Plateau in search of that *thing* whose blood did not correspond to that of any known animal. I didn't believe this should happen. So while he was gone I set fire to the shed. It was an old place, dry as tinder. By the time he returned it was a seething cauldron of flame. It made a fitting pyre for the body of Bill Patterson.

But I don't know. I have wondered often, since. Somehow I have a feeling that Keith Patterson may not be dead, after all. That is, if a human can live in a dimension of which he cannot conceive.

The more I think of it, the more I try to reconcile that which I saw with that which Keith told me, the more I believe that the thing which descended upon Keith there in the shed was not a mouth . . . but a gigantic paw. I saw four circles appear, you know. Four circles with a flat black spot above. It could have been four huge fingers and a palm descending to grasp the daring tridimensional "Flatlander" who had the audacity to match wits with a creature from a superior world. If that be so . . . and if the *thing* were intelligent . . . Patterson might be alive . . .

I don't know. But sometimes I am tempted to organize another expedition to the Maratan Plateau, myself. I'd like to learn the truth concerning the *thing* from beyond the gateway. The truth concerning Keith Patterson's fate.

* * *

JUST A MODICUM

When reproached on the strength of fantastic newspaper reports for being a millionaire wallowing in luxury, I have always replied that nobody can ask less to live on than I. Give me a convenient flat in town and a comfortable villa in the country with a few acres of lawn and garden, a couple of cars for long and short distance travel, and a supply of pocket money not necessarily exceeding a couple of thousand pounds, and there is not a more contented man on earth than I.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, *Everybody's Political What's What?*

WHITHER THOU GOEST

Ah, what a trifle is a heart,
If once into love's hands it come!

JOHN DONNE, 1572-1631

I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine : he feedeth among the lilies. Thou art beautiful, O my Love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me . . .

The Song of Solomon

I Have Come Suddenly Upon My Heart

You may be decay and a platitude
Of flesh, but I have no other such memory of life.
You may be corrupt as ancient apples, well then
Corruption is what I most willingly harvest.
You are Evil, Hell, the Father of Lies ; if so
Hell is my home and my days of good were a holiday ;
Hell is my hill and the world slopes away from it
Into insignificance. I have come suddenly
Upon my heart and where it is I see no help for.

CHRISTOPHER FRY, *The Lady's Not for Burning*

Avowal

" Get in," said Theo, masterfully in control. " You've got no time to waste. I'll see to all that . . . This is a matter that needs speed," he said to the driver. " Go as quickly as you can, short of killing that poor beast. Lady Pinson's father is perhaps dying." Then he joined Adela in the cab and they rolled away . . .

Suddenly she shivered violently, from the cold without her and within. Quite clearly, Theo heard the castanet-clatter of her teeth. She drew nearer to him, as though to find warmth from the contact. " You must put my coat about you," he said. He pulled off the coat and placed it round her shoulders. She protested feebly . . . And not knowing that he was torturing her, he said : " Lean against me if it makes you feel warmer." She leaned hard against the white sleeve clothing his left arm, and to ease things and make her feel more comfortable he placed it round her. " There," he said, " is that better ? "

And now Adela scarcely dared to breathe. She was thinking no longer of her father . . . Theo's left hand rested lightly on her waist.

She longed to put her own hand upon it and press it there. She was warm now, with a warmth engendered in herself. Her breasts were taut with longing. She gave a wriggle which brought her closer upon him, and then, with half her being crying " Don't, don't ! " and the rest of her borne irresistibly down with longing for the kind of love she had never known, she took hold of his hand, rejoicing in its long cool thinness, raised it from her waist, and frankly pressed it against the tell-tale swelling of her breast.

Then, indeed, the part of her being that was anchored to old loyalties and unselfish impulses started back aghast. She remembered Theo's voice saying : " I want to ask your advice. I believe I'm in love." She felt cleft in twain, and, as if she were waking in fright from a dream, she sat bolt upright, pulling her body away from the disastrous intoxicating contact with his. His hand fell limply down, and now each was leaning back in a corner, each looking out of a separate window at the silvered hedges sliding by and the trees sleeping where they stood. But the avowal had been complete, irrevocable. Nothing, Adela thought, nothing can be the same between us again. I have destroyed myself.

HOWARD SPRING, *Hard Facts*

For I Hae Luve Wi'in Me . . .

For I hae luve wi'in me that 'ud mak
the hettest flames o Dante's lowean Hell
flouer reid whorls o passion, an syne crack
in blads, wi ilk yin burnan up itsel . . .

MAURICE LINDSAY, *Nicht Music*

Lodestone

If a man love an ill-favoured woman, he loves her to distraction; or he loves her either by a strange weakness in himself, or because she has charms more secret and invincible than those of beauty.

LA BRUYÈRE, 1645-1696, *Les Caractères*

For All Eternity

Softly, steadily swings the intangible shuttle,
Weaving from you to me, from my heart to your
heart again.
Whole as the wind is love, immaculate as music,
Love that is the lightnings, and the endlessness
of rain.

BABETTE DEUTSCH, *On a Night of Rain*

With These I Would Gladly Go

" Fair, Sir," said the Captain, " let these things be. Nicolette is a captive that I did bring from a strange country. Yea, I bought her at my own charges of the Saracens, and I bred her up and baptised her . . . and one of these days I would have given her a young man, to win her bread honourably . . . What wouldst thou deem thee to have gained, hadst thou made her thy leman, and taken her to thy bed? Plentiful lack of comfort hadst thou got thereby, for in Hell would thy soul have lain while the world endures, and into Paradise wouldst thou have entered never."

" In Paradise what have I to win? Therein I seek not to enter, but only to have Nicolette, my sweet lady that I love so well. For into Paradise go none but such folk as I shall tell thee now: Thither go these same old priests, and halt old men and maimed . . . and such folk as wear old amices and old clouted frocks, and naked folk and shoeless . . . These be they that go into Paradise, with them have I naught to make. But into Hell would I fain go; for into Hell fare the goodly clerks, and goodly knights that fall in tourneys and great wars, and stout men-at-arms, and all men noble. With these would I liefly go . . . With these I would gladly go, let me but have with me, Nicolette, my sweetest lady."

ANDREW LANG, *Aucassin and Nicolette*

Surrender

O Love! they wrong thee much
That say thy sweet is bitter
When thy rich fruit is such
As nothing can be sweeter.
Fair house of joy and bliss,
Where truest pleasure is,
I do adore thee:
I know thee what thou art,
I serve thee with my heart,
And fall before thee.

Author Unknown, 1605

Ad Extremum

An ancient chronicle of Tours records that when they deposited the body of the Abbess Eloisa in the tomb of her lover Peter Abelard, who had been there interred twenty years, this faithful husband raised his arms, stretched them, and closely embraced his beloved Eloisa . . .

ISAAC D'ISRAELI, 1766-1848,
Curiosities of Literature

SEA CHANGE

A purple cloud — a new moon madness — oh, this was no light conversion!

by DAVID WALKER

HARRY AMBLER is my name. This is my story.

That Thursday was one of those dull days when the east wind brings mist from the Bay of Fundy, and half the morning goes by before the sun breaks through. I picked up the Reverend Angus Lamond at the Manse. We always used to take a walk late on Thursday mornings, Angus having finished the first draft of his Sunday sermon.

" Where shall we go ? " I asked as we drove along. We happened to pass the Lady Member at that moment, on her way into the village. She waved from her big black car.

" Let's walk along the Lady Member's cliffs," said Angus. So we went that way, not realizing what the morning had in store for us and the Lady Member and a few hundred other people.

" That's an unusual cloud," he said suddenly, as we turned off the main road.

I looked back towards the village. It certainly was an unusual cloud, a swirling, billowing mass with a hint of violet amid the grey. It was pouring in fast from the sea, yet not exactly pouring, for there was a solidity about it, a massive body of movement. It was a deeply-coloured backcloth for the white houses, close to them now, swallowing them up. The violet deepened to purple; the movement stopped. The thick cloud crouched over the village, blotting it out. One had an extraordinary feeling of power down there a mile away.

We sat watching from the car. The blanket of cloud was still for perhaps a minute, but at that moment everything was still—no breeze moved the trees, no bird sang. Then it began to move away; the nearest house showed white, the purple faded, the whole close-knit mass, storming within itself, rolled back towards the homely wall of grey mist which covered the islands. It disappeared as suddenly as it had come.

" Queer," I muttered, fiddling with the gear lever, yet not bringing myself to action.

" Aye, queer," said Angus, the exiled Scot, his voice broader than usual. " I never saw the like of that before." He gave his grey

head a shake. " But the sun plays tricks with the mist. You'll often see queer shapes and colours in the sky."

" Yes," I said. " It must have been that." I drove into the Lady Member's property. But the picture of it stayed with me, and I felt a little uneasy, as one does sometimes at the sight of a great thunder-head, and the inscrutable power of nature.

The sun came through as we walked along the cliffs ; the bay was calm, and the white houses of the village looked comfortable and prosperous round the point.

Angus was a good companion, as clergymen generally are. In the company of sinners they can indulge their disputatious love of argument. They can wrestle with the devil in an academic way, with nobody caring.

It must have been two hours later that we came back to the car. We had just climbed in when the Lady Member's car drew up beside us in a spurt of gravel. She leaned over to speak through the open window.

She is a handsome woman, a woman who knows well how to conceal a remorseless driving force under feminine blandishment. But she was pale now and wild of eye.

" Come to the house," she said sharply, and drove off.

One does not disobey the Lady Member, so we followed, wondering what could have made her look so distressed.

She was waiting for us at the front door. " An extraordinary thing's happened," she said. Her lower lip was trembling. " An *extraordinary* thing's happened. They've gone mad in the village."

" Mad ? " I said. " How do you mean ? "

" It's crazy," she said, with a suspicion of a sob. " But they're giving everything away. Look ! "

I hadn't noticed before, but the back of her car was piled high with a remarkable assortment of goods, all jumbled up as if they had been cast in there by an exuberant boy of ten helping his rich mother with the marketing. On the top of the pile were six loaves of bread, a pressure cooker, a fishing rod, three pairs of shoes, a portable wireless, two six-inch flagons of perfume ; and many other things below—enough to fill the back of a large car.

" Robbin's gave me five bottles of liquid corn remover," she said bitterly.

Angus smiled, but his voice was sympathetic. " Wouldn't you like to sit down and tell us all about it ? "

We went into the house.

" There's nothing much more to tell," she said, speaking in a great hurry. " There was a queer purple cloud covering the town as I went down the hill." Angus and I exchanged glances. " I don't know if that could have had anything to do with it. But it disappeared

before I reached the first houses. Then women ran out from both sides of the road to stop me. One had a silver cup, the other a ghastly gold filigree flower-basket thing, and their eyes were shining with a sort of ecstacy.

" They forced the things on me. I couldn't stop them. ' Wait ! ' they shouted. Then they turned and ran back into their houses. I was a bit upset because I'd never seen them before in my life. So I didn't wait. Well, it was the same in the High Street. They all deluged me with things ; and the result's in the car." She nodded her head wearily towards the front door.

" It wasn't only the shop people. Look at this ! " She opened her bag and drew out a wad of notes, five pound notes. I was electrified to see them. " Naps Tantivy was standing on the kerb opposite the Post Office. He saw me and shouted, ' Maureen ! ' ; you know that bull of a voice he has. The old boy came puffing over towards me. He leaned into the car and pushed this bundle into my hands. He had that same look on his face—a blind happiness ; I can't describe it.

" And he said, ' Maureen, please take these. I'm just going to make a long distance call to Head Office, and I want to get rid of them first. I'm going to give ten thousand pounds to every hospital in the county—to the Children's and the . . .' And he reeled off a long list. Then he turned and ran off to find a telephone."

The Lady Member suddenly began to cry. She dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief ; the insidious delightful promise of *Tabu* caressed my nostrils. " You may think it's funny," she said accusingly to me and Angus. " But it isn't. It's terrible. It's a disease or something. It's that horrible cloud. I know it is."

" Were they still the same when you left ? " Angus was serious now.

" Yes. I came out by the back road. And even then I had difficulty in getting through. We'll have to stop them somehow, or the village will be ruined. I'm sure it's only in the village ; the people on the hill are behaving quite normally. What can we do ? "

I was watching her face. I saw the distress fade. It was replaced by a musing gleam, a look familiar to all those who had been swept along on a tide of action by the Lady Member.

" You're sure everyone was the same ? " I was beginning to see that this might indeed be a serious thing ; for if holidaymakers from inland descended on the place, they would clean it out in a day.

" Yes, everyone. Even the children were behaving in a ludicrous fashion, trying to push their toys into one another's hands."

" It's a verra serious commentary on the worrld's condition," said Angus, his brow furrowed. " But I doubt we'll need to take some action."

" I shall call the P.M.," said the Lady Member decisively. She picked up the telephone and asked for a long distance call. Her slim hands and nyloned legs entwined gracefully ; a very good looking woman, wearing fifty years like thirty.

The P.M. came on the line after his secretary. I was sitting only a yard or so away, and I could hear his voice, a little flat on the telephone, but avuncular, even caressing.

" Hello, Maureen, m'dear. Nice to hear your voice. Are you being good ? "

" Hello, Tom," she said, and she gave him a few seconds of the woman in her. " Now listen ! " Then she told him the story. She told it brilliantly, with urgency.

I heard him laugh when she had finished. " But what can *I* do ? "

" Don't laugh, Tom ! " she hissed. " You've got to stop it. Do you realize that Naps Tantivy has probably given away a hundred thousand by this time ? "

" I hope he gives the whole damn lot away," said the P.M. " It goes into the wrong kitty anyway as far as we're concerned."

" But it isn't Naps that matters. It's the ordinary people. My good man, do you realize that a few sharks could clean this place up in a couple of hours ? We've got to do something, I tell you."

" For a woman of distinction, Maureen, you speak a very racy brand of English." The P.M. sounded more like an indulgent uncle than ever. " But I tell you, I can't do anything about it. We can't interfere in the liberty of the subject. We can't stop him giving things away."

" You can pass an Act of Parliament, can't you ? " All traces of cajolery had left the Lady Member's voice. She looked and sounded furious. Our village is very near to her heart.

" How could I get an act passed in time ? " he protested.

" The House is sitting. You could get the three readings through by this afternoon. You could send police down here at once to cordon the place off." She paused, and added with menacing gentleness, " That's what you're going to do."

" But my dear girl, I can't do it. I can't . . ."

" Listen, Tom. If you don't do it by this evening I'll never speak to you again. What is more, I'll make your name stink throughout the country. I mean it ! "

" Yes, Maureen." I could hear the old gentleman sigh far away. " I know you mean it."

It only took the Lady Member another minute to persuade him finally. Then she hung up. " The P.M.'s a dear man," she said. " I adore him. It's just that I have to be a little strict sometimes."

Angus coughed. Perhaps his presbyterian soul was disturbed

by overhearing snatches of this racy exchange with Olympus. But he looked admiringly at Maureen.

" We should go down," he said. " There may be something we can do."

I was thinking the thing over as we drove down the hill. The kindly public-spirited Lady Member, the unworldly Minister—they were good people, not feeling temptation, but what about me ?

" It's all very well for you, Angus," I said. " You're a godly fellow, not interested in worldly possessions. But what about me so full of wickedness ? If they start pushing things on me, I don't believe I can take it. No, I mean I believe only too clearly that I can't help taking it."

" Just say ' No,' Harry," he said gently. So we entered the village.

Maureen had not exaggerated. The place was, indeed, the scene of a strange confusion. Even in the quiet side lanes people were out, their arms laden. They were hurrying, and had a questing look on their faces, the look women have when they struggle at a clearance sale. Yes, that was it—like a clearance sale in reverse. It was a very queer thing to watch, and pathetic, too, because every man and every woman was a giver, and not a taker amongst them ; so already frustration showed on many faces.

I don't know how they guessed that Angus and I were different from themselves ; but they did at once. A pair of those anxious eyes would observe the car, and they would light up in a way that was beautiful to see.

I kept the car moving slowly with the windows closed. Angus got out at the gate of the Manse. There were twenty or thirty people following us by that time.

" I'd go straight home if I were you," he said a little stiffly.

I drove on, watching the hurrying people in the mirror. It was a surprising thing, but hardly any of them turned into the Manse. They followed me down the High Street on my way home. It was almost the shortest way home, not quite. I couldn't resist my curious need to know what was happening in the shops. I couldn't resist the tingle in my spine or the small voice which told me of all the things I had not been able to afford to buy.

Jim Ransome saw me first. He was standing in the door of his ironmongers' shop.

" Hey, Harry ! " he called. " Come in a minute."

I hesitated, not sure about leaving the car. But I went in.

Jim was always a good salesman ; today he surpassed himself.

" What can I get you ? " he said eagerly.

" Oh, nothing, thanks, Jim." But I could not stop my eyes from

sliding over the outboard motors, lawn mowers, split-cane rods, and rifles, all the things I needed badly.

" It's a gift-sale, you know," he said in a businesslike way. He and his sons were watching me like hawks. Wherever my eyes rested for a moment, there one of them would hurry. No other customers were in the shop. In a few minutes there was a pile of merchandise round me.

" I don't really want to buy a thing," I said lamely.

" It's a gift sale," he said again. " Now what about that new canoe ? " I knew the one he meant. It cost thirty five pounds, which was far more than I could afford.

" Oh, well," I said, inching my way towards the door and through it. They picked up all the things and followed me to the car.

" Wait a second," called Jim. He disappeared at the double. I stood uneasily, wondering what else he would bring. He came out carrying only a pink piece of paper.

" I'm sorry to keep you waiting, sir," he said. " Here's the invoice." He had never called me *Sir* before. Somehow that made it the more embarrassing. I glanced at the invoice, made out to Mr. Harry Ambler. Everything was meticulously listed, and at the bottom one word scrawled—*free.* I put it in my pocket.

" Thanks, Jim," I said, turning to the car.

" I'll deliver the canoe," he said.

" Did you say canoe ? " said several voices. " D'you want a canoe ? " And half a dozen men turned and ran off.

It would be tedious for all concerned if I were to detail my accumulation of property that day. Let me say only that by the time I reached home I had been given a fifty-foot cruiser, a luxuriously fitted ocean-going boat, two herring weirs, free lobsters for life—for personal reasons I refused to accept the lobster factory—and Mrs. Burder's cream sports car. But all this was only the beginning.

Naps Tantivy was waiting on the doorstep. I asked him in, always having had a weakness for the old fellow. And after all, I could afford to be indulgent.

We had a glass of sherry. After a while he cleared his throat. He seemed nervous.

" I wondered if you would take these bonds," he said humbly, drawing a lot of paper out of his pocket. " They're worth five thousand pounds. I wish it was more, but I persuaded the hospitals to accept a good deal from me this morning."

" Look, Napoleon," I said. " I can't possibly accept this. I've got too much already. Anyway, I can't take money from people."

His face fell and he began to plead with me. He pleaded forcefully. He was determined in his giving, which, of course, is only

what you would expect from such a man. "Look out of the window!" he said.

I was startled by what I saw. The lawn was now cluttered up with every conceivable kind of property—canoes and dinghies, motor scooters, sets of crockery, a breakdown truck of all things to give a fellow, at least ten cords of hardwood . . .

"Why should they give you things when I can't?" he pleaded. "Everyone gives what he has, and I have money. *Please!*"

So I gave way. And later on, as I sat down alone to my cold corned beef, opened by my own hand, I realized that I was a rich man. The thought of all this property was not so exciting as it should have been, but there was one exciting thought—up to now the only domestic help I had had was a woman coming in for two hours every morning. Mrs. Fitzpatrick made my bed and dusted the house and sometimes cleaned the lettuce. Otherwise I did everything myself. But now it was different; now I could afford a housekeeper; now someone would bring me a cup of tea in the morning; now someone would cook the breakfast, and lobster newburg whenever I felt like it, and steak and kidney pie with my favourite flaky pastry. Now I was free of the kitchen for ever.

I went out immediately after lunch to find a cook-housekeeper, or rather to let one find me, for I had guessed that cook-housekeepers, like other items ordinarily scarce, would be cheaper than two a penny.

It was a peaceful summer's afternoon, warm and still; and a missel thrush sang from a tree above the pasture. The streets were deserted now, but I went warily, for the memory of my experiences earlier in the day was sharp in my mind.

I walked up the slope where the sycamores were tall and shady. I was happy because I knew I would find a housekeeper, and I had not found her yet, and there was a little searching to do—a quiet woman, middle aged and kindly, that was what I wanted.

Voices sounded from the right. I looked over. It was a man and a girl. They sat on a seat beneath a shady tree, talking earnestly. Bob and Penelope, I knew them well by sight. They were engaged to be married—the handsomest young couple in the village, and very much in love. There was that thing about them which warms your heart, yet gives you a jab of melancholy for a few days in the past that you remember. But Bob and Penelope did not sound happy.

"We can't go on," Penelope was saying. She looked bewitching with that figure of hers, and her face framed in tawny hair, sad now.

"No, we can't," said Bob in a flat voice. He played moodily with a twig.

I went over towards them. I'd only had a few hours of it; but I was beginning to feel that it would be nice to help somebody else.

"Hello, you two," I said. "What's up?"

"We're depressed," they said together. They looked at one another, a casual exchange of glances.

Penelope looked up at me. "Love's the trouble," she said. "You see, Love's mostly taking when you come down to it."

I hadn't thought of that, but I saw it at once. I saw the cool predicament they were in.

"Love's giving, too," I said.

Penelope had violet eyes. They had often stirred my near middle aged soul. You know the way you suddenly see all the strength in a girl's eyes. And then she would say *Good Morning* with a kindly lack of interest and go her way.

But she was looking at me quite differently now. She stared as if I were the man she'd been dreaming about on hot summer evenings; and me so plain that women often wince.

I coughed nervously. Admiration as frank as that is embarrassing, particularly so if you are not accustomed to it. But such is one's natural conceit that I never paused to think the thing out, to plumb her line of thought. I bridled, looked down, and raised my eyes again. The invitation was still there. It was unbelievable; but, of course, I believed it at once.

"You don't have any work in the house?" she asked softly.

"How d'you mean, work?" I was bemused.

"Oh, cooking. Cooking or anything."

"She's a wonderful cook," said Bob eagerly. He had kept quiet up to then. He glanced from me to Penelope and back again.

"What about wages?" I said, trying to keep the thing businesslike.

"Oh, wages," said Penelope. "When can I start?"

"You can start now," I said.

She jumped to her feet and came nearer to me. She was a lovely girl. She stood there a moment; then turned reluctantly. "I'll go down right away," she said, and ran across to the road in the direction of my house.

The Lady Member dropped in about six.

"A Scotch and soda, please," she said.

I brought the drinks, and we sat down quietly.

"The police are here," she said, "and the P.M. 'phoned an hour ago. They passed the bill this afternoon in secret session. As far as I know, nothing will get out except those hospital bequests of Naps'."

"Surely there must have been a good many people out of the

village when it happened ? "

"No," she said. " That's the ironical thing. Everyone was here except you and the Minister. You remember that storm last week when the ship broke up on Tiger Rock ? "

I nodded.

" Well, a great deal of wreckage came ashore this morning, and all those who might have been out of the village were down there getting pickings."

" Yes, that is ironical."

" Talking of pickings," said Maureen a little coldly, " you seem to have done fairly well for yourself." She looked through the garden window. The accumulation had moved apace. Someone had brought me a portable swimming pool. It was erected on the lawn, with water lapping the rubber sides. But I hardly glanced at it.

" I couldn't help it," I said. " They insisted on giving me things. I was the one who gave, really. I gave them pleasure."

" That's one way of looking at it," she said in an unpleasant way. " But if you'd hidden from them, you could have helped it. I'm only glad I've been able to restrain myself from giving them that kind of pleasure."

" I needed things and you didn't," I protested. Still, I did feel lame about the whole affair, and not benefited to any great degree. The marginal satisfaction of additional canoes dwindles and soon becomes negative.

" It may not be a bad thing," she mused. " They know Angus isn't a taker. Yes, perhaps it's just as well you're here. We can keep an eye on you, and return the stuff afterwards." She sighed. " If there *is* an afterwards."

Penelope came in then with cheese straws and sandwiches. I hadn't asked her to. She just thought of it herself. She looked adoringly at me.

" Who's that ? " hissed the Lady Member when she had gone out.

" My cook. She's a treasure."

" When did she come ? "

" This afternoon."

Maureen stared at me with cold malevolence. " If you . . ." she began.

" Oh, all right," I said, sadly.

She stood up abruptly. " I must go now. Thank you for the whisky."

" Thank Mr. Williams at the wine shop." We parted with acrimony.

And so it went on for two more days. What a lucky fellow, some of you are thinking. What a lucky fellow to become a millionaire in

a morning and acquire the loveliest of cook-housekeepers the same afternoon, with hardly an ounce of effort expended over either acquisition.

I still thought I was lucky next morning when Penelope brought me my cup of tea, strong and sweet. But I was a prisoner all that day. If I as much as poked my head out of the door, the scouts would see me, and a murmur of voices would sound, followed by people running with a variety of bric-a-brac.

Even Penelope began to weigh on me. " Did you really like it ? " she would say about the omelette or the soufflé. " Is there no way I can do it better ? " She did not ask me in the selfish way some people ask to gratify their own egos. No, it was altogether different from that. And the fond smile that all the men and women gave me ; I had never been so popular in my life. In fact, I had never been popular before, and it should have been a delightful situation. But by the second morning I was grouchy, pensive, and ill-at-ease.

I tried to get rid of a few canoes. " Oh no," they would say with long faces. " What could *I* do with a canoe ? Please take this daguerreotype of my grandfather. It's very interesting, you know. It was done in the days when you had a head-rest so as not to blur the negative. It's a work of art, really. We always treasured it before."

Before was a word they were beginning to use, *Before* with emphasis, *Before* in the bad old times.

By the third day people were looking haggard. The reason was simple enough—they forgot to eat. They forgot about everything in their insatiable desire to give. One does not become very thin in three days of skimpy eating, but you acquire a hollowness of cheek, a sunken eye brightly opaque. That was how they looked.

Angus Lamond saved the situation. In his sermon that Sunday morning he said, " You must have strength to lead a godly life ; you must have strength to do good to others. So eat ! Form a committee, pool resources, make sure that everyone eats as a duty." It was a very sensible, practical sermon, typical of that good man.

" Is there nothing else I can do for you ? " asked Penelope when she brought me my coffee and Benedictine after dinner.

I stirred restlessly in my chair. I looked at her face which was lovely, oval and soft, but with the haunting deep-eyed beauty of hunger.

" Have you eaten today ? " I said harshly.

She hung her head ; the eyelashes made fans of exquisite tracery, but no mystery as there should have been.

" *Have you ?* "

" I had a slice of bread this morning."

" Go now ! " I commanded, sounding like a Roman Centurion. " Go now and eat a proper meal, and let me see you afterwards."

She came back later. " I had lots to eat," she said, looking more unhappy than before, looking as if the food had driven virtue out of her. " Is there nothing you want ? "

I sprang to my feet. " No ! " I shouted. " No, no, ten thousand times no ! "

Poor Penelope's face went pale. She crossed her arms on her breast and drew back.

I was ashamed of myself. It was despicable to lose my temper like that, a thing I hardly ever used to do.

" I'm sorry, Penelope," I said when I felt calmer. Tears came into my eyes. I couldn't stop them. " It's just that everyone gives me things, and no one ever lets *me* give anything. It's so very unfair. So very selfish."

I pushed past her out of the house and walked along the street towards the quay. I always went that way when I needed the comfort of being alone. It was ten o'clock on a Sunday evening, three days since everyone but me became unselfish. That's one way of looking at it, I thought bitterly.

I went down to the shore. The tide was high, and there was no wind, not even a light slip of air to ruffle the water. The bay went round in a long dark sweep. The small yachts were graven in the harbour. It was a warm night, but the light of the moon was cold.

I sat on a rock. The water was below my feet; and now that my shoes had stopped crunching on the mussels and squeeging on the seaweed, I could hear the night. There were so many noises after all. And it was quieter because of the sounds. It was a lively, interrupted, night-time silence.

The island showed clearly out there, double with the moon shadow. I heard the plaintive calls of the gulls, never resting, wheeling and diving somewhere below the moonlight ; the piping of a wakeful plover, the hoo-ing of a loon.

And I was filled with remorse. I saw the error of my ways. I saw how I had profited by the strange madness which had come to other people. I might pretend to the Lady Member that my taking had been a giving. But that was not the truth. I had accepted for the pleasure of possession.

Now I saw with bitterness that a poor man can be happier, that ownership can be a haunting misery. It is an idea that many people talk about. But who indeed believes it ? Who has ever had that conviction forced upon him ?

It was a bitter thought. Bitter . . . but was it bitter ? Was it not the most beautiful thing I had ever known ? Was it not clear and

bright, a perfect conquest of my selfishness ? I saw back over the whole of my life, over the whole sordid pageant.

This was no madness in the village. These people were right. They had found the key.

There is no word but ecstasy for my feelings, such an ecstasy as drew a sudden curtain before my eyes, veiling the moon, making my seeing a violet wall of happiness, bright with the picture of my sinful life rejected, purple with the intensity of my experience ; and a great wind sounded in my ears ; and the tang of the ocean was doubly strong. But the purple cloud was the strength of my revelation.

I do not know how long I sat there, how long it was before the strange glow faded from my eyes, and I was back with myself on a rock beside the water under a summer moon.

But I did come back. " I will arise and go now," I said aloud, remembering the beautiful words, able at last to say them humbly. So I arose and hurried to my home.

The street had been deserted when I had come out earlier. But it was crowded now. People moved from the pale moonlight into the softer circles underneath the lamps and out again, all of them silently hurrying in my direction. Yet they were not completely silent. There was a murmur in the night air, not a soothing murmur like bees high in a lime tree, but a staccato buzzing. There was menace in it. Their faces were shut off from one another, but when they looked at me and hurried on ahead, I caught fleeting glimpses of hatred which would have struck a chill into me had I felt less exalted. I did not care. I wanted to do one thing only.

The need to do this thing grew upon me, and my pace quickened until I moved as fast as they, until I hurried with the crowd and knew them to be enemies and yet did not fear them. I was running by the time I turned the corner near my house. I ran forward to the garden gate and into the growling, milling throng of people. Small clouds were in the sky now, and the moonlight grew and faded into darkness and came again.

A grotesque figure came towards me, lurched, missed me by inches, and went on through the gate. It was a man under his canoe. He was one of the lucky ones ; he had found his property at once ; but others were not so fortunate. They would run a few steps and bend down and move again, like anxious, irritable travellers searching for their luggage on a dim-lit quayside.

I stood on the lawn, jolted by the searchers, disregarded for the most part ; but every now and then a man or a woman, frustrated in search, would stand close to me with arms a-kimbo. " Where's my bag of clubs ? " or menacingly, " What did you do with my mower ? "

I was filled with an unbearable shame, with a desperate longing to help these people find their rightful property. So great was my agony of mind that my body would not move to help them. Someone collapsed the portable swimming pool, and a surge of water splashed above my ankles ; but still I was rooted to the spot, watching the moon-glinted pots and pans, the canoes, the truck and the sports car, the lawn mowers, all the things which meant nothing to me, being taken by their owners through the garden gate. And a woman started her motor scooter and rattled explosively away.

In an incredibly short space of time the garden was cleared. No loose thing remained, not even a stick of hardwood. The moon had sunk low towards the horizon. I heard nothing but the deep breathing of the ten or twenty people who crowded round me.

" Couldn't you find your things ? " I asked, speaking with difficulty because of my need to help them.

" No," they said with one slow growl. The tops of their heads rose and fell against the sky. They rocked from heels to toes and back again, moving closer to me inch by inch as the seconds went by. But my humility was too great for me to be afraid.

" Just one moment," I said, thinking of a way I could make a small reparation, deeply ashamed that their property should have gone astray ; although, truth to tell, I had moved nothing from the garden. There must have been a few loose characters among those who had come and taken things away. I turned towards the house.

There was a heavy hand on my shoulder. " No, you don't ! " growled big George Mason.

" I've a few bearer bonds," I said. " I'd like you to have them. I can't tell you how sorry I am that things have gone astray."

" Let him go, George," said someone. " We'll watch the other side of the house." Two men ran off.

I went upstairs and came back in a minute with the bonds. " Please take them," I said, handing out small wads to everyone. " I'd be most grateful if you would."

A match flickered. " Ten pound bonds ! " someone gasped ; and there was an incredulous chorus of oohs and aahs, and the papery slapping of counting-off between fingers.

" You don't owe us this much . . . This little fellow must be crazy . . . I've got two hundred and sixty pounds' worth . . ." They were good and honest people, pleased but uncomfortable.

" I do implore you," I said. " I hate the things. I can't bear having them near me." Indeed, my revulsion from bonds and from all forms of wealth was complete at that moment.

They went away. I stood alone in the garden. It was only then that I remembered old Naps, the rightful owner of the bonds. There was a moment of anxiety ; but it did not last—Naps had plenty ;

Naps could do without ; I needn't waste any sympathy on Napoleon Tantivy. Mine was no soft conversion.

I went into the house and along the hall. The door of the sitting room was ajar, and a light was on inside. It was long past midnight, but I had no wish for sleep ; my exhilaration was still strong. I went into the sitting room. The two people at the far end of the sofa went on kissing one another passionately. A man's dark head, and a girl's tawny rumpled mane. That must be Penelope. It was like seeing a stranger ; for I had forgotten all about her.

I stood for a moment, not wanting to disturb them. But perhaps . . . perhaps . . . My exuberance swelled again. I coughed discreetly.

Their lips came apart. Penelope burrowed her tousled head into his shoulder. Bob's eyes opened. He blinked as the starry look faded from them. It was replaced by a hard dislike. " Oh, it's you," he said.

Penelope sat up with a start. She blushed scarlet. " Oh ! " she gasped, and her mouth stayed open. I had forgotten how beautiful she was ; but it meant nothing to me. Love's mostly taking when you come down to it. That was what she'd said the first day. How well I understood it now.

" You're always shoving your ugly mug into things," Bob snarled. He half rose, but Penelope restrained him.

" I only wondered if there was anything I could do for you," I said apologetically.

" No," cried Penelope, and her voice rose in a most unladylike crescendo. " No, no, ten thousand times *No !* "

" There's only one thing you can do," said Bob. " And that's beat it before I sock you."

They were being a little harsh with me, but I was not to be put off as easily as that. I could see that all was well with them again. I could see their strong love which I had envied once and did not envy now.

" When are you two going to be married ? " I asked. A splendid thought was growing in my mind.

" As soon as we can get a house," he said sourly. " What's it to you ? "

" Only that I'll give you this house," I said, " if you'll be kind enough to take it."

I went over to my desk and sat down and wrote without hesitation. You could have heard a mouse squeak in the room. *I hereby give and bequeath my house at so and so and so and so to Miss Penelope* . . . " Come and witness it, Bob," I said over my shoulder. He witnessed the paper, and I gave it to Penelope.

" Thanks, Mr. Ambler," she said, still open mouthed. " Thanks a lot."

" I can't tell you how grateful I am. Perhaps you can get a license tomorrow, and of course take occupation the moment you're married." In a peculiar way I was beginning to be master of the situation. " In the meanwhile you'll both have to go home."

" But where are *you* going to live ? " said Bob. He looked vaguely worried.

" If you could lend me that old tent . . ." I began. Then the telephone shrilled. " Off you go," I said, and went along the hall. I could hear the screen-door shut and their love-slurred footsteps on the path outside.

" Hello," I said.

" Is that Ambler ? "

" Yes, Harry Ambler speaking."

" Napoleon Tantivy here."

" Hello, Naps old fellow."

" What about that five thousand I lent you ? "

" Lent me ? But Naps, you didn't *lend* me . . ."

" Don't Naps at me ! Do you imagine I'd *give* you five thousand ? "

" That's exactly what you did," I said amiably. The iron of goodness had entered my soul.

" I want it back," he barked. I could hear him spluttering. Old Naps was working up for one of his tantrums. " I'll sue you. I'll have you clapped in gaol. I'll break you, you miserable—"

" You can't have it back," I interrupted. " I gave it all away half an hour ago. And as for suing, sue away ; you haven't got a leg to stand on. What's five thousand to you, anyway ? "

" But it isn't only five thousand," he wailed. " I gave two hundred thousand to those hospitals. I'm bankrupt."

" I don't believe it," I said sharply. " There's plenty more where that lot came from."

The explosive noises told me he was still there, but no words came over the wire. Naps was beyond speech. I was a little surprised at the original Adam still in me. But I was sublimely aware of my rightness. I would fleece that likable old buccaneer ten times over and have no pang of regret.

" It's just too bad about the money, Napoleon. I tell you what I'll do. You know that Shiraz rug of mine you wanted to buy ? " The Shiraz was perfection, my only good rug. It was the only thing of real value that I'd owned in the good, the bad, old days.

I heard him grunt.

" Well, I'd be very pleased to give you that. I know you'd appreciate it." It was true ; he would.

" It's not worth a tiny fraction . . ." he expostulated.

" No, I know it isn't." And I hung up.

I went upstairs and undressed and stood in my pyjamas watching the first pale streaks of dawn in the east. Then I got into bed. Perhaps it was the last time I would sleep in it. Perhaps Bob and Penelope would be married tomorrow and would take possession by the evening. Take possession. Give possession.

Sleep came to me quickly. Sleep carried me away on a strong tide of happiness, so much accomplished, so much more still to give.

* * *

SPLICE THE MAINBRACE!

Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum—we're going 'Over the Bar' on the look out for ocean-going vessels. But easy as you go or you may confuse the *Santa Maria* with the *Ark Royal*! Allow one point for recognizing the boat, one for the author, one for the source, making twenty seven points in all. Twenty or more points earns an extra 'tot'! The answers are on page 159.

1. *She headed south from Bombay—"a high and lonely pyramid, gliding, all shining and white, through the sunlit mist"—but there was a dark stranger in the crew's midst, and there were great running seas off the Cape that year . . .*
2. *"With a cargo of ivory, And apes and peacocks, Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine," she was sailing home to sunny Palestine.*
3. *On a winter's morn, on a stormy day, it sailed away with only a beautiful pea-green veil tied with a ribbon, by way of a sail!*
4. *Her master was in his six hundredth year, her passengers were many, small and large, and, built of gopher wood, she sailed the waters for one hundred and fifty days.*
5. *About the prow she wrote her name, "she loosed the chain, and down she lay; The broad stream bore her far away . . ."*
6. *The harpoon was darted; the stricken whale flew forward . . . then "concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew." Everything disappeared and "the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago."*
7. *It took forty singing seamen from the dirt of London-town "Across the seas of Wonderland to Mogadore" . . . But could the grog they dreamt they swallowed make them dream of all that followed?*
8. *"If it had been Aladdin's palace, I could not have been more charmed . . . but the wonderful charm of it was, that it was a real boat, which had never been intended to be lived in, on dry land."*
9. *Her captain ate the cook in a week or less, then he sat and croaked his simple joke: "Oh, I am a cook and a captain bold . . . And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite . . ."*

THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS

Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace

by RAY BRADBURY

THE house was a good house and had been planned and built by the people who were to live in it, in the year 1980. The house was like many other houses in that year ; it fed and slept and entertained its inhabitants, and made a good life for them. The man, his wife and their two children lived at ease there, and lived happily, even while the world trembled. All of the fine things of living, the warm things, music and poetry, books that talked, beds that warmed and made themselves, fires that built themselves in the fireplaces on cold evenings, were in this house, and living there was a contentment.

And then one day the world shook and there was an explosion followed by ten thousand explosions and red fire in the sky and a rain of ashes and radio-activity, and the happy time was over.

In the sitting room the voice-clock sang, *Tick-tock, seven o'clock, time to get up !* as if it were afraid nobody would. The house lay empty. The clock talked on into the empty morning.

The kitchen stove sighed and ejected from its warm interior eight eggs, sunny side up, twelve bacon slices, two coffees, and two cups of hot cocoa. *Seven nine, breakfast time, seven nine.*

" Today is April 28th, 1985," said a phonograph voice in the kitchen ceiling. " Today, remember, is Mr. Featherstone's birthday. Insurance, gas, light and water bills are due."

Somewhere in the walls, relays clicked, memory tapes glided under electric eyes. Recorded voices moved beneath steel needles :

Eight one, run, run, off to school, off to work, run, run, tick-tock, eight one o'clock !

But no doors slammed, no carpets took the quick tread of rubber heels. Outside, it was raining. The voice of the weather box on the front door sang quietly : *Rain, rain, go away, rubbers, raincoats for today*. And the rain tapped on the roof.

At eight thirty the eggs were shrivelled. An aluminium wedge scraped them into the sink, where hot water whirled them down a metal throat which digested and flushed them away to the distant sea.

Nine fifteen, sang the clock, *time to clean.*

Out of warrens in the wall, tiny mechanical mice darted. The rooms were acrawl with the small cleaning animals, all rubber and metal. They sucked up the hidden dust, and popped back into their burrows.

Ten o'clock. The sun came out from behind the rain. The house stood alone on a street where all the other houses were rubble and ashes. At night, the ruined town gave off a radio-active glow which could be seen for miles.

Ten fifteen. The garden sprinkler filled the soft morning air with golden fountains. The water tinkled over the charred west side of the house where it had been scorched evenly free of its white paint. The entire face of the house was black, save for five places. Here, the silhouette, in paint, of a man mowing a lawn. Here, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy with his hands flung in the air—higher up, the image of a thrown ball—and opposite him a girl, her hands raised to catch a ball which never came down.

The five spots of paint—the man, the woman, the boy, the girl, the ball—remained. The rest was a thin layer of charcoal.

The gentle rain of the sprinkler filled the garden with falling light.

Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace. How carefully it had asked, " Who goes there ? " and getting no reply from rains and lonely foxes and whining cats, it had shut up its windows and drawn the shades. If a sparrow brushed a window, the shade snapped up. The bird, startled, flew off ! No, not even an evil bird must touch the house.

And inside, the house was like an altar with nine thousand robot attendants, big and small, servicing, attending, singing in choirs, even though the gods had gone away and the ritual was meaningless.

A dog whined, shivering, on the front porch.

The front door recognized the dog voice and opened. The dog padded in wearily, thinned to the bone, covered with sores. It tracked mud on the carpet. Behind it whirred the angry robot mice, angry at having to pick up mud and maple leaves, which, carried to the burrows, were dropped down cellar tubes into an incinerator which sat like an evil Baal in a dark corner.

The dog ran upstairs, hysterically yelping at each door. It pawed the kitchen door wildly.

Behind the door, the stove was making pancakes which filled the whole house with their odour.

The dog frothed, ran insanely, spun in a circle, and died.

It lay in the living room for an hour.

One o'clock.

Delicately sensing decay, the regiments of mice hummed out of the walls, soft as blown leaves, their electric eyes glowing.

One fifteen. The dog was gone. The cellar incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the flue.

Two thirty-five. Bridge tables sprouted from the patio walls. Playing cards fluttered on to pads in a shower of pips. Martinis appeared on an oaken bench.

But the tables were silent, the cards untouched.

At four thirty the tables folded back into the walls.

Five o'clock. The bathtubs filled with clear hot water. A safety razor dropped into a wall-shelf, ready.

Six, seven, eight, nine o'clock.

Dinner made, ignored, and flushed away; dishes washed; and in the study, the tobacco stand produced a cigar, half an inch of grey ash on it, smoking, waiting. The hearth fire bloomed up all by itself, out of nothing.

Nine o'clock. The beds began to warm their hidden circuits, for the night was cool.

A gentle click in the study wall. A voice spoke from above the crackling fireplace: "Mrs. McClellan, what poem would you like to hear this evening?"

The house was silent.

The voice said, "Since you express no preference, I'll pick a poem at random." Quiet music rose behind the voice. "Sara Teasdale. A favourite of yours, as I recall.

> *'There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,*
> *And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;*
> *And frogs in the pools singing at night,*
> *And wild plum-trees in tremulous white.*
> *Robins will wear their feathery fire*
> *Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;*
> *And not one will know of the war, not one*
> *Will care at last when it is done.*
> *Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,*
> *If mankind perished utterly;*
> *And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,*
> *Would scarcely know that we were gone.'"*

The voice finished the poem. The empty chairs faced each other between the silent walls, and the music played.

At ten o'clock, the house began to die.

The wind blew. The bough of a falling tree smashed the kitchen window. Cleaning solvent, bottled, crashed on the stove.

"Fire!" screamed voices. "Fire!" Water pumps shot down water from the ceilings. But the solvent spread under the doors,

making fire as it went, while other voices took up the alarm in chorus.

The windows broke with heat and the wind blew in to help the fire. Scurrying water rats, their copper wheels spinning, squeaked from the walls, squirted water and ran for more.

Too late! Somewhere, a pump stopped. The ceiling sprays stopped raining. The reserve water supply, which had filled baths and washed dishes for many silent days, was gone.

The fire crackled upstairs, ate paintings, lay hungrily in the beds! It devoured every room.

The house was shuddering, oak bone on bone, the bared skeleton cringing from the heat, all the wires revealed as if a surgeon had torn the skin off to let the red veins quiver in scalded air. Voices screamed, "*Help, help, fire, run!*" Windows snapped open and shut, like mouths, undecided. *Fire, run!* the voices wailed a tragic nursery rhyme, and the silly Greek chorus faded as the sound-wires popped their sheathings. Ten dozen high, shrieking voices died as emergency batteries melted.

In other parts of the house, in the last instant under the fire avalanche, other choruses could be heard announcing the time, the weather, appointments, diets; playing music, reading poetry in the fiery study, while doors opened and slammed and umbrellas appeared at the doors and put themselves away—a thousand things happening, like the interior of a clock shop at midnight, all clocks striking, a merry-go-round of squeaking, whispering, rushing, until all the film spools were burned and fell, and all the wires withered and the circuits cracked.

In the kitchen, an instant before the final collapse, the stove hysterically hissing, could be seen making breakfasts at a psychopathic rate, ten dozen pancakes, six dozen loaves of toast.

Then crash! The attic smashing kitchen down into cellar and sub-cellar. Deep freeze, armchairs, film-tapes, beds, were thrown in a cluttered mound deep under.

Smoke and silence.

Dawn shone faintly in the east. In the ruins, one wall stood alone. Within the wall, a voice said, over and over, again and again, even as the sun rose to shine upon the heaped rubble and steam:

"*Today is April 29th*, 1985. *Today is April 29th*, 1985 *Today is . . .*"

* * *

PASS!

The greatest labour saving device of today is—tomorrow.

NASSAU

★*The death of Eric Knight in an air crash in* 1943 *was a loss both to English and to American letters. At the age of forty five he died an American citizen, but a nostalgia for his native Yorkshire was a constant in his life, and inspired some of his greatest work, notably the Sam Small series, long familiar with Argosy readers.*

Knight was himself a Yorkshireman, born at Menston near Leeds in 1897. *As a boy he had worked in the woollen mills, migrating to America in his teens, where, after many vicissitudes he became a journalist, and a successful novelist.*

Best-seller followed best-seller, and Hollywood's interest in his work lead him to accept a job as a studio scriptwriter. It was a short uneasy sojourn but it had one happy result—for it was against this Californian backcloth, inspired perhaps by that old nostalgia, that the versatile Yorkshire character Sam Small made his début, in what is perhaps his author's most famous short story.

THE FLYING YORKSHIREMAN

by ERIC KNIGHT

THE conviction that he could fly didn't come over Sam Small gradually. It just hit him all of a sudden.

That night he and Mully had been down to Los Angeles to hear ister Minnie Smith at the Temple. At first Sam hadn't wanted to o, but before it was over even he agreed that it was quite a bit of a o, and Mully had as rare a time as she'd had in all her born days.

Sister Minnie sang a hymn she had written herself, which arted : *Won't you buy my violetsss—m'dam ?*

When that was over she had all the people who were from alifornia stand up and turn round and shake hands with the people ho were sitting and who weren't from California, and say : " God less you, Brother and Sister," as the case was.

Sam felt right funny, what with a stranger pumping his hand, ut Mully decided that California was the right nicest and friendliest lace they'd struck since they'd started on that trip round the orld.

Sam tried to make out as if he didn't think much to it all, though ven he got interested when Sister Minnie tore into her sermon.

It was entitled : *Faith Will Move Mountains*, and a rare

champion thing it was, too, all full of quotations and little halts to give the people chance to applaud, and big halts where everyone sang the chorus of a hymn and clapped their hands to keep time. During these long pauses Sister Minnie would work up another store of energy and come out for the next round as fresh as a daisy.

Everything depended on Faith, she said, and for her part she believed in it so much that she just *knew* that if the five thousand or so Brothers and Sisters present tonight, Praise be to God, were to head right out of that Blessed Temple and drive down to San Bernardino, she would bet you right now that if they would have Faith together they could make Mount Baldy shift ten feet towards the sea.

The only thing that stopped her from putting it all into execution she said, was that her legal advisers had told her it would cause too many possible suits for damages; because naturally, if you moved a mountain ten feet there was going to be a lot of disturbance. There'd be a ten foot gap on one side, like as not running down through a lot of good real estate developments, and on the other side there'd be a churning and a whortling of the earth that wouldn't be too good for California.

But nevertheless, as she was saying, Faith was a very, very wonderful thing, in fact, a marvellous thing, and if the Sisters and Brothers believed in the power of Faith, there was nothing they couldn't do. Nothing.

That was the sermon and everybody applauded and clapped their hands in rhythm. Then they closed up with some more hymns one half of the audience singing and then the other half to see who could be loudest; then the women singing and after them the men all by themselves, to see who could be loudest. And then it was over and everybody streaked for the doors.

Mully had had a good time, and there were no two ways about that. When she and Sam had pushed out through the crowd and were standing on the corner, waiting for the Wilshire Boulevard bus, she said:

"Well, Ah don't knaw how tha feels about it, Sammywell, but Ah've had a rare good time, and Ah thinks this is the right nicest place us has struck in all our travels."

Sam didn't doubt that she'd enjoyed it, but he knew, too, her remark was all part of the campaign to keep him in California. Neither Mully nor Lavinia, their daughter, ever missed a chance to put in a good word about Southern California. Vinnie wanted to stay so's she could have a bit of a dab at becoming one of these cinema stars; and Mully wanted to stay partly because of Vinnie and partly because she could never get over it that palm trees really grew in a white man's land.

So they never missed any opportunity now to keep after Sam about how good California was for his chest, and how that since he now was retired and a chap of independent means as you might say, there was no use leaving this sunshine to go dashing right back to England.

Now Sam knew all about the way the women were working on him, and he knew why they were doing it. He knew, too, that it wasn't over sensible to battle with them because probably they'd wear him down in the end. But still and all, a chap can't help putting his ha'porth in once in a while. So he blew his nose and said:

" Aye, taking the rough with the smooth, this ain't a bad place. But still and all, Ah'd give ten quid, Ah would, reight now, to be sitting back hoam i' t' *Spread Eagle* wi' ma chums on either side o' me and a good pint o' Guiness's in front o' me and a nice gert big coal fire to warm ma behind on."

Mully snorted.

" Sammywell," she said. " Didn't Ah tell thee to put a clean henkercha' in thy pocket afore tha coomed out toneight ? "

Sam knew he was licked if he got drawn away from the subject into any minor skirmishes.

And while she barneyed on, his mind went floating away in a hazy sort of manner and settled on two things. First he began wishing the bus would hurry up and come so Mully would stop talking ; second he got to thinking about Sister Minnie's sermon. He began wondering if a whole bunch of people, all having Faith together with a sort of yo-heave-ho effect, really could move a mountain—if only for a matter of an inch or two.

He thought about it a long time, and decided that if a chap was going to do anything with Faith, he'd be smart if he picked on something rather easy at first and progressed gently to stubborn things like mountains.

Now all the time Sam had been thinking that, he'd been standing there waiting for the bus—and it gets rare chilly in California when the sun goes down.

And that was what put the bus idea in his head. He said to himself that if a chap decided to try moving things by Faith a bus would be a champion thing to begin on—it having wheels which, as you might say, would aid the whole proposition.

It was no sooner thought than done, because, as Sam said to himself, it doesn't cost a chap a ha'penny to have Faith. Even if it doesn't work out, what have you lost ?

So Sam shut his eyes and said to himself, " Ah have Faith that by t' time Ah open ma ee's that so-and-so bus will have arrived."

And by gum, he had no sooner said it than Mully was poking him in the short ribs and saying :

" Waken up, gormless ! "

And he opened his eyes, and there was the bus standing there.

Now naturally Sam was both surprised and pleased. As he said to himself, it might have been just a bit of coincidence, but still and all, it fair gave a chap something to think about. The best thing to do about it, he decided, was to give it a good thinking over so he kept right at it until they got to the end of the line. Then he and Mully got off and walked slowly and wearily along the palisade towards their boarding house.

They were both quite a bit played out after their exciting evening, and they went along slowly, arm in arm. Mully always liked that good night walk along the *alameda*, because it was peaceful and romantic and so tropical.

Then, too, it's on a cliff high up over the shore, and as you walk along you can look out over the rustic wood railing and see far out to the ocean, or you can look straight down on the shore and see all the beach castles of the film stars.

Mully never tired of looking down from that palisade. She never liked to go to bed without a sort of good night look at it ; because she always thought that some night she might see a light in an upstairs window, and that would be her favourite film star going to bed, perhaps.

So when Sam and Mully got up there, they stopped and looked over the rail.

And it was there and at that moment, that he first got his amazing conviction. Perhaps it came from being so high up, together with the sermon and the upsetting episode of the bus coming by Faith. No matter what it was, he got the conviction as surely as ever a man had one. What he felt was that he could fly. That was the conviction he had. He had it so strongly that he couldn't keep quiet about it.

" Mully," he said. " Tha knaws, sometimes Ah hev a feeling that a chap could put up his arms and launch himself off of here and fly —if he nobbut had Faith."

" Aye. If ! " Mully retorted. " And if thy aunt hed of hed you-know-what's she'd ha' been thy uncle."

In spite of her determination to live up to the position of wife of a rich retired man, Mully could be quite Yorkshire at times. And her last remark wasn't calculated to help a chap who wanted to talk things over. Not things like Faith and really moving mountains.

It really made Sam a bit mawngy. But there's one thing about a Yorkshireman. The madder you make him, the more determined he gets.

And as Sam got undressed that night he couldn't help feeling stubborn.

" Well, at that," he said to himself, " Ah'll bet a chap *could* do it —if he hed Faith enow."

He kept thinking that after he got into bed. He felt he'd like to fly, just to show Mully that she wasn't right all the time. And as he lay there, he had Faith, and had Faith, and then his hair almost stood on end. For he could feel his body lifting, and lifting until it was completely clear of the bed beneath him.

It was so amazing that he could hardly believe it himself. So, cautiously, he passed his hand under his body. It was true ! As far as he could reach, he was free of the bed. It was so staggering that he had to drop back into bed to think it over. He must have been quite clear of the bed, because when he dropped back the mattress squeaked, and Mully said, snappily :

" Ba gum, Sammywell, if tha doesn't stop jiggling this bed Ah'm bahn to get up and sleep on t' sofa."

But Sam hardly heard her. He was too upset at his discovery. He decided to wait until Mully was surely asleep and try it again, but unfortunately, he fell asleep himself.

In the morning when he woke, his first thought was to tell Mully of his wonderful discovery. But, somehow, it didn't seem too easy in the daylight, sitting there at the breakfast table, with the Californian sunshine spanking down on the tablecloth and on the tea pot and muffins and marmalade and porridge and eggs and a little rasher of ham and cold steak-and-kidney pie and two or three nice bloaters that Mully had bought down in a Scotch bakery and grocery shop she'd run across down by the Santa Monica pier.

Moreover, Lavinia came in to breakfast, and it's hard for a chap to talk about imaginative things like flying of his own accord when, right across the table, there's his own daughter with her face all cold cream and her wearing silk lounging pyjamas.

So all Sam said was, " Tha knaws, it's funny, Mully ; but Ah dreamt last neight Ah were really flying around. Ah were floating i' t' air like one o' them bloomin' Zeppelins what come ovver i' last wartime but one."

" Hmmm," said Mully. " What was it that tourist office lad said we maun ax for in this country when us wants brimstone and treacle ? "

" Sulphur and molasses, mother," Lavinia said.

" Nay now, it ent ma blood that's off," Sam protested. " This were a varry real and onusual dream, so much so Ah still think Ah were awake."

Nevertheless Sam said nothing more about flying ; but he determined that the minute he was alone he would try it again. He had quite a wait, because the minute Mully and Lavinia were gone out, the maid came in to clean up the rooms. There was the maid,

dusting and sweeping and humming to herself in a come-day, go-day, God-send-Sunday sort of Californian way, and Sam thought she'd never be through.

But at last she was. Sam shut the door, tapped out his pipe and got ready. He lay on the sofa and willed and willed, and almost before he could catch his breath there he was floating in the air with the greatest of ease. For a while he just lay there, suspended in space, and amazed at this wonderful new power. He turned his head and looked down. He was fully a foot above the sofa. Very gently he floated to one side, where he was a full three feet above the floor. There could be no mistake about it. Amazed at himself he floated back to the sofa.

" Well, Ah'll be a monkey's ooncle ! " he breathed to himself. " That Ah will indeed ! Why even Ah can scarcely believe it's so."

To prove it to himself he tried it again. This time he floated up in the air, then drifted out clean into the middle of the room. He felt quite uncomfortable, somehow, but he thought that only natural.

Then he turned over to look down at the floor. Very slowly he began revolving his body. And the minute he did that all feeling of awkwardness left him.

Once he was face down towards the floor, a new and tremendous feeling of security and power seized him.

" Why, of course," he said to himself. " Ah were upside down —like a bird trying to fly on its back. This maun be the right way up ! "

So now, imbued with a new and very great confidence, he stretched out his arms and zoomed down towards the sofa. A foot from it, he banked with his palms, brought his body upright, and lit on his feet as gently as a thrush.

" Well, if this ain't a do ! " he breathed.

He spread his arms again, pushed gently with the tips of his toes, and took off again. He soared along like a glider, making a complete circle of the room about a foot below the ceiling. As he did so he was seized with a tremendous exhilaration. All hesitation now was gone, and he used his new power with a fierce joy. He found flying took almost no physical effort whatsoever. Nor did he need any conscious mental effort in controlling himself ; that is to say, he did not have to *think* how to do things.

When he came to a corner the muscles of his body and the delicate distribution of his weight adjusted themselves by some instinct so that he banked perfectly.

The world became a new place to Sam Small. To us who merely walk, the world is a two dimensional place ; but to Sam it was now three dimensional.

The room in which he flew thus took on aspects unknown to us

who could only know it from a monotonous five foot eye level. He could see the tops of doors and of cupboards and could get a bird's-eye view of the chairs and table—which looked very silly pieces of furniture indeed from that angle. He noted, too, that while the room might be clean down below, it certainly wasn't up where he was. There were cobwebs over a cupboard and dust galore above the doors.

"Ah'll just hev Mully give that maid a good talking-to," he resolved.

Then he gave himself over to the beautiful pure joy of flowing and effortless flying. He swooped round the room, landing lightly as a feather where he would, taking off again with the merest preliminary drive of his toes. He practised landing in awkward corners, to test the range of his new abilities.

Unfortunately he was so occupied that he didn't hear Mully and Lavinia come back; and when they walked into the room where he happened to be, there he was, perched on top of a tallboy.

"Well, Ah'll goa to Halifax," Mully snorted. "Sammywell Small! What in the name o' heaven is ta laiking up theer for? Coom dahn here afore tha breaks they bloomin' neck!"

Sam was so surprised and upset by being discovered that he forgot about flying and jumped down in quite an ordinary, mortal sort of way. He landed with a horrible crash that nearly drove his spine up into his back teeth, and of course there was quite a bit of a do about it.

Mully rubbed Sam's back with a little embrocation and sailed into him so hard that Sam got stubborn and wouldn't have told her about his new accomplishment even if he had got a chance to get a word in edgewise.

"Sammywell Small," Mully said. "Heaven knows Ah've swallered a lot o' things since Ah married thee; but this caps all. Ba gum, lad, if tha goas on like this, folk'll begin to think tha's balmy i' t' crumpet. Eigh, sometimes Ah rue the day we took out a license."

"Aye?" Sam came back. "Well, it cost me seven and sixpence. Ah could ha' got a dog for t' same price."

"Aye, and there's soom days Ah wish tha'd bowt a dog," Mully rebutted. "And today's one on 'em."

For several days after that Sam did nothing about flying. For one thing, he was quite jarred up from his jump off the tallboy. For another, Mully gave him no chance to be alone.

But one night Sam woke up, and there was Mully sleeping as sound as an Egyptian mummy. So Sam tiptoed out of bed in his nightshirt and took off. For a couple of hours he flew round the living room, zooming and volplaning and banking to his heart's content.

It was quite a sight, for Sam was steady as an albatross in flight. Just one lift of a palm, and he was banking ; a slight bend of his knees and he zoomed. It all came naturally to him and he flew with a sort of wild ecstasy.

After that, night after night, when Mully was abed, he would swoop round the house, having great fun cutting capers and corners, sailing through doorways, swooping within an inch of the carpet and then banking swiftly upwards again.

He began to set himself difficult tasks. For, curiously enough, although all the movements that a bird makes normally in flight came naturally to him, he had to learn of his own accord the evolutions that an aeroplane can achieve. He taught himself to loop the loop and do the barrel-roll, the wingover, the falling leaf, the tail-spin.

Finally he became very proficient in this sort of thing. But it was his desire to emulate not only a bird, but a machine, that got Sam into a bit of trouble.

He was soaring about in the dining room one night, concentrating on his latest stunt, the Immelman turn, which is a sort of mixture of a half inside loop and a barrel-roll, bringing you to the top of the loop the right side up. For the first time that night Sam managed to do it right nicely. The surging thrill of this new evolution intoxicated him, and he sailed about the room, wildly doing Immelman turns. Unfortunately, in the dark, he forgot about the fine cut glass chandelier right over the dining room table, and crash ! He went into it head first !

Sam, all tangled up in cut glass chandelier, came down with a jangle and a thump that would have wakened Lazarus himself.

When Mully came charging in there was a pretty sight to be seen indeed. She switched on the light, and there she saw Sam in his nightshirt, sitting in a welter of bits of cut glass and blood and wire and burst electric light bulbs.

" Eigh, bless ma heart and soul ! What's tha been oop to now ? " Mully snorted wearily.

Sam was as dizzy as a goat in spring, for he'd taken a crack on his head that had laid about four inches of scalp open, and likely would have split the skull of anyone else but a Yorkshireman.

" It were a forced landing," he said. " Help ma oop out o' here."

" Help thee oop ! Ah should think soa ! And a pretty picture indeed tha is, ligging there at thy age, too ! "

Sam did his best to make himself decent, for just then Lavinia came walking in, and the girl started giggling fit to die. At this Mully turned and caught the lass a skelp over her backside that lifted her nearly a foot in the air.

For no matter what Sam had done, Mully was determined that Lavinia should grow up with the decent respect for parents that any good girl should have—Hollywood or no Hollywood.

" That'll teach thee, my fine young lady, to watch thy P's and Q's," Mully said. " Now off tha goas back to bed. Ah'll stand no sauce from thee."

She was that put out she gave Lavinia an extra clip on the lug for good luck. Then she pulled Sam out and got him to bed, and got a doctor on the telephone who came over and put six stitches in Sam's head. What with one thing and another Mully had a right eventful night.

For a couple of days Sam was in bed and Mully said never a word about the goings-on. But Sam could see by the way she held her lips tight together that she was just saving it all up. And the day Sam got up, Mully hustled Lavinia out of the house, and sat Sam on the sofa and had her say.

" Now Sam," she said, " Ah want thee to bear in mind that Ah'm quite remindful of the fact that, after all, tha did turn out to be an inventor, what with they self-doffing spindle and all. But what Ah say is this, there's limits to what a man can do, even an inventor, in a manner of speaking.

" But this much Ah will tell thee. When a chap of thy age starts gating up in t' middle o' t' neight, and swinging in his shirt-tail from the chandeliers like a hoorang-ootang, well, all Ah say is, if tha keeps it up they'll be sending for thee from Menston yet.

" Now Ah wean't say no moar about it, but enow's enow, so pull thysen together, lad. And if tha wean't do it for me ; at least remember tha hes a daughter what's gate her life and career before her, as you might say."

Then Mully jumped up and went and locked herself in the kitchen and had a champion good cry. After that she made a nice pot of tea and fixed up a tray for Sam with a duck egg and a little bit of ham and some brown bread and butter, and a few odds and ends of pikelets and toasted muffins and scones and a couple of lemon curd tarts and a little pot of Stilton cheese—just the things that Sam liked especially well.

Then they sat down and had tea and never a word more was said about the chandelier.

Of course, after that tea, Sam was contrite, just as Mully had known he would be, and he resolved to behave himself.

" Ah'm that sorry, Mully," he said. " It were just that Ah feel a little funny-like i' this land. Let's goa hoam to Yorksha."

" Now Sammywell, lad. Tha knaws our Vinnie's right on the varry brink and threshold of a film career. Why can'ta stay here ? "

" Well, could Ah hev a tyke, then—happen just a bit of a tarrier ? "

"Nay Sammywell, lad. Tha knaws t' landlady wean't have no doags i' this house. Ah doan't see why tha can't goa out and mak friends. Goodness knaws there's plenty of well-to-do chaps like thee that manages to find this place interesting."

"Them? Eigh Mully, they're nowt but a lot o' mawngy owd toffs—sitting on the park benches each day waiting for t' undertaker to coom along and measure 'em. Ah can't mak friends wi' the like o' yon. Why, they got such a bloomin' funny accent Ah gate nobbut one word i' ten o' what they're yammering abaht. Now, if Ah nobbut hed a dog . . ."

"Tha can't hev noa dog!" Mully stated. And that ended it.

Sam really did put up a terrifically hard battle to keep from flying again. But, naturally, it was too much for him. If you yourself were suddenly faced by the fact that you were the first man in the history of the whole world who had developed the power to fly by your own efforts, you would not be able to dismiss the matter lightly.

And neither could Sam.

In the days that followed, as he sat in the sunshine or walked along the paths under the palm trees, he would watch the sea gulls lifting and soaring in the magnificent air currents. He never got tired of watching them. Now he was, as you might say, practically a bird himself, Sam found himself thinking like a bird, and thinking and knowing things that the ordinary man never gets in his head. Mostly he sensed and felt about air currents.

There would be days when he sat there and he would be greatly troubled, for the air currents were short and choppy—what Sam called "wivvery." He didn't know where he got the word, but that explained it. On those days his body would be almost torn by a sort of anguish, and he would sit there watching the gulls fight and turn and twist and make myriad delicate re-adjustments of their bodies every second as they flew. Sam himself could feel those currents, and as each gull went by he would squirm and twist his own body as if to help it along in its battle, just as a crowd of people at the tense moment of a championship golf match will twist their bodies and strain when they see an important putt going an inch to one side of the cup, as if their straining would bend the ball towards the cup.

After such a day Sam would go home, weary and irritable, and would only half listen to Mully chattering on about how their Vinnie was right on the verge now of being given a screen test by an important company.

But then there would be other days when the air currents would be broad and untroubled—great anthems of sweeping simplicity that came chanting in from the Pacific.

Then Sam felt at peace, for the magnificent breezes would move in from the sea and, meeting the face of the great earthwall, would shoot up untroubled to great heights. Especially was this so in the late afternoons when the seldom-failing sea breeze came powerfully to the land.

It was exactly like music, only instead of a vibration that could be heard, it was a music that Sam could feel on the skin of his face, thrumming and tingling so beautifully that he forgot the earthbound world. And Sam would sit there, his heart lifting with the birds far above, until Mully would come along the path.

"Eigh-oop, lad," she'd call. "Time to coom hoam afore it gates too chilly."

They would walk home and she would tell him of Lavinia's progress, and Sam would say aye and nay at appropriate places; but he never really listened. His mind was half a mile up in the air.

Sam really meant to keep his promise to Mully and behave himself. Though each day, on the palm-covered walk high up above the shore road, his senses and muscles cried to be sporting up on the air currents, he did no flying.

For one thing, Sam's Yorkshire practicality overcame him. As he said to himself, it would look right queer now, if a chap were to suddenly go sailing up and down in the air with the sea gulls in front of all those people, sitting there on the benches and taking the nice Californian sunshine. Everyone would be that capped, and likely as not there'd be all sorts of bother afterwards.

Besides Mully kept her eye on him practically every minute of the waking day. He could hardly take a walk alone. Naturally, he got very fed up with this.

"Ah'm no owd codger that can't tak a walk alone," he would complain.

"That so be as it may," Mully would sniff. "But just the same, Ah'm off to keep an ee on thee."

This, of course, meant that she had to let Lavinia make the rounds of the studios alone. But, just to show how strange things happen, Lavinia seemed to get along much better, and before a week was up she really had a screen test at G-M-G Pictures, and it looked as if the cinema were going to be interested in her after all.

Poor Sam grew very melancholy, and the mood continued even after Mully began to let him out alone.

Apathetic and useless, he wandered about the streets each day, walking for mile after mile, and discovering only greater lonesomeness in that strange land of palm trees and neon lights and blue mountains and people who spoke with a funny accent.

It was that desire to find someone like himself that made him stop one day in Beverly Hills as he saw a sign. It said: *How About That Canine's Washing and Stripping.*

Underneath was a big question mark. And under that it said: *Dick Hogglethwaite. Thirty Years' Experience in England and America.*

" Happen it's a dog Ah want," Sam said to himself. " And who would be a better chap to talk to than someone who's had experience in England? And even if Mully wouldn't let me have no tyke, there'd be noa harm i' talking to the chap, like, to see what prices they get over here."

So Sam ducked under a low-hanging palm frond and pushed open the screen door. There inside he saw a little chap stripping a wirehair.

Sam watched him work a while, then the chap looked up and said: " Well, whet can Ah dew for tha? "

" Eigh, how long's ta been away fro' Huddersfield? " Sam asked.

The chap stopped his work.

" How did ta knaw Ah were fro' Huddersfield? " he asked.

" By thy bloomin' accent, o' course."

" Well, Ah'll goa to the devil," the chap said, surprised. " Ah been here going on thutty year, and Ah thowt Ah'd lost ma accent."

" Eigh, tha does talk a bit like a Yankee," Sam agreed, " but there's enow left soa a chap could tell. Ah'm fro' near Huddersfield mysen."

" Soa Ah could tell," the chap said. " Here, grab that tarrier and coom i' t' back room. Ah gate to wash a sealy."

They went in the back room where a regulation bath tub sat amid the tiered cages and kennels.

" Aye," the chap said, as he soaped up the sealyham. " They don't know owt about dogs here."

He cocked his head.

" Eigh, 'owd this sealy a minute. There's someone out front."

Sam stripped off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. Since a chap shouldn't be idle when there's work to do, he nearly had the sealy finished when the kennel chap came back. He was carrying a miserable bundle under his arm.

" In the name o' Halifax," Sam breathed. " And what is that? "

" The woman just browt it in," the other said. " And she sez, she sez: ' Can you do owt wi' my dog? ' And Ah sez, ' What in the name o' the devil is it? ' And she sez, ' It'm Yorkshire tarrier—Ah give him a bath and Ah can't get him combed out ony more.' "

He held up the poor tangled mite, that looked like a tarred and feathered Chihuahua, for Sam to see. And Sam started to laugh. It was the best laugh he'd had since he'd left England.

" Eigh, ba gum. Ah nivver thowt Ah'd live to the day when Ah gate to a land what's soa dumb the people tries to wash a Yorksha tarrier," Sam gurgled.

" Didn't Ah tell thee, lad ? " the other said.

He held up the poor bedraggled dog, and the men lay back and laughed till they could hear nothing but their own laughter.

Washing a Yorkshire terrier was the funniest thing Sam had ever heard.

" It'll tak thee a month o' Sundays to get it combed out again, lad," Sam would say. He'd wipe the tears from his eyes, but then he would be able to see the terrier again, and that would start him off laughing again.

From that day on Sam's days were full, and thoughts of flying again were far from his mind. His waking hours were spent with Dickie Hogglethwaite in the little dogshop, where they would wash and pluck dogs, clip a few claws and stand aghast at the ignorance of Americans where dogs were concerned. For Sam, like every Yorkshireman, was born with a fully-fledged omniscience in all things canine.

Things might have gone on indefinitely as they were if it hadn't been for a boarding Pekingese that squeezed through the fence.

Sam and Dick were in the back yard letting the boarders out for exercise when Dick gave a yelp that shook the blobs off the acacia trees.

" Cop that blooming Peke," he yelled. " She's i' heat and she'll run to other side of nowhere."

Sam made a grab, but he was too late. All he got was two whiskers off the Peke's tail as it went through the hole in the fence.

The minute he saw it Dick started out through the front shop, and he was moving fast, because before his eyes was a picture of that Peke disappearing up into the hills and meeting a Saluki or a Keeshond, or even a great Dane—and then he'd have a devil of a job explaining a fine litter of mongrel puppies to the Peke's owner, who was a film director, and difficult enough as it stood.

So Dick did record time out through the shop and round into the fields at the back. And when he got there, there was Sam with the Peke tucked under his arm.

" Well, Ah'll be blessed," Dick said. " How did tha get out here ? "

" Joomped ovver t' fence, lad," Sam grinned. " Here, watch ! "

So just taking off from tiptoe, he sailed over the fence. Then he landed, turned, and jumped back again. That is, it looked as if he were jumping, but of course, it was the merest, simplest little bit of flying for Sam.

" Eigh, lad," Dick said, thoughtfully. " That's a varry special gift tha's gate there."

" It is, that," Sam replied.

They went back into the shop.

" That were a champion jump," Dick went on. " That there fence is all of seven foot if it's an inch. And tha did it wi' a Peke bitch under thy arm, too. Why didn'ta tell me tha were a champion athlete ? "

" Nay, Ah nivver done no athletics in ma life beyond knocking a bit o' knerr and spell," Sam said.

" You don't mean to tell me," Dick ruminated. Then he fumbled in a drawer and found a tape measure and measured the fence. It was seven feet two inches.

" Eigh," he said to Sam. " We got to dew summat about this. Here tha can jump seven foot two, and offhand Ah think the world's record is nobbut six foot eight or summat like that. Ba gum, lad, Ah gate an idea we could clean up a pretty penny on this."

Because this Dickie Hogglethwaite was a sporting sort of lad, his mind, of course, ran in that direction. And his big idea was to enter Sam in the Veterans Relief Games at the Victor McLaglen stadium.

" Here, dost'a think it all reight for ma to goa capering round at ma time o' life ? " Sam asked.

" Ah doan't knaw," Dickie said. " But Ah do knaw there's nowt wrang wi' taking a little brass off these here blooming Yankees. They been winning t' Olympics that long it's time a ruddy good Britisher showed 'em up, and won a few pounds doing so."

" Aye, there'd be nowt wrang wi' winning a honest bet," Sam agreed.

So Sam went into training. Dickie was the manager and after watching Sam work out in the dog-run for a week, he entered his man in the running high jump, broad jump and pole vault. He fed Sam a diet of raw eggs and sherry and toast, and gave him massages with his very special embrocation, which he had invented for massaging hurt dogs, and which was made of alcohol, camphor and vinegar.

All in all he did everything a serious trainer could do.

" Now Sam, lad," he said on the day of the meet, " ah've gate thee in as fine a shape as ivver a man o' thy age could be got. Ah've done ma part. Now thee do thine."

The high jump was first on the schedule of Sam's events. Dick stood there and passed up the jumps until it got to five feet ten. Then he pulled off Sam's robe.

" We passed up jumps, so tha maun do it first time, lad," he said. " Now tha can do it easy."

Sam said nothing. He felt a little nervous. But he felt Dick's

faith behind him, so he trotted up to the bar and sailed over. There were three other lads, and two of them made it.

The bar went up to five eleven. Sam made it, but one of the other lads dropped out.

That left only Sam and one more competitor, and they jumped and jumped, the bar going up a bit at a time, until the loud speaking arrangement in the grandstand began to say :

Equalling the outdoor Olympic record in the running high jump. The high jump, ladies and gentlemen. Sam Small of Great Britain now jumping.

Sam trotted up and sailed over. The crowd applauded. The other lad gave a mighty leap and jumped over. The crowd applauded again.

Then the loud speaker began to shout about how this would be a new world's record, and all the photographers came rushing over and Sam took his little trot, and soared over with inches to spare. The noise and excitement was tremendous. Then the other lad tried, but he couldn't make it.

A crowd gathered about Sam, and the officials rushed over with tapes to make sure the bar was set right. They had a great argument, till Sam said, " Well, lads, to make sure, just shove it up a couple more inches."

Quite amazed, they did so. And Sam sailed over.

Then Dickie Hogglethwaite ran up and threw the dressing-gown round Sam and pulled him away. The officials wanted Sam to see how high he could go.

" Nothing dewing, lads," Dickie said. " Now Ah'm his manager and Ah'm his trainer, too. We got two more events and Ah won't let ma man tire hissen out."

Then he got Sam in a corner of the stadium and began rubbing his legs again with training fluid, for all the world as if Sam were Jack Dempsey or somebody.

Dickie fluttered about Sam like a hen with a chick, and after a while took him out for the pole vault. Of course, it was the same story. Sam made a new world's record at fifteen feet three inches. Then came the broad jump, and Sam was tempted to jump one hundred yards, but he considered that might cause trouble and Dickie wouldn't get his bets paid off. So he just jumped thirty feet for a new record.

All in all, the two friends had a fine day and they felt righteously happy as they went home and fed all the dogs and counted their winnings.

Then Dickie sent out for four pints of beer and he let Sam break training and drink one of them.

It was quite a day, indeed.

When Sam set out home that night the reaction from the excitement of the day set in. He felt lonesome and depressed and homesick. He wanted to talk over with someone his new and strange power, and who, of course, would be better than Mully ?

But when he got home Mully and Lavinia were all adither. Vinnie had just signed a five year contract with G-M-G Pictures, and of course, the excitement was tremendous. Sam couldn't get a word in edgewise, and he went to bed feeling very lonely.

The next morning Sam's troubles began. The newspapers were all full of it, about the man who had broken three world's records in one day.

The front pages had photographs of Sam in his jersey and pants, sailing over the bars with his white moustache floating in the wind behind him.

There was no doubt about it, Sam was important news. He was upstairs when Mully found him.

" Now what's tha been up to ? " she began.

Sam burrowed down into Mully's wardrobe.

" Why, nowt," he said. " Ah were just sayin' to mysen, Ah sez : ' Ah'll just give Mully's boots a bit of a blacking and get 'em right nice and shiny the way she likes 'em.' "

" Nivver mind soft-soaping ma about ma boots. What's ta been up to ? "

" Why, Ah telled thee, nowt at all," Sam said, innocently.

" Nowt ! Then what's twenty newspaper reporters yammering downstairs to see thee for ? And what's this ? "

She jammed a bundle of newspapers under Sam's nose, and there was a picture of him doing the broad jump.

" Why, Ah were just dewing a bit of athletics yesterday as you might say. It ain't a varry good likeness, dosta think ? "

Mully grabbed the paper from him.

" Eigh Sam Small. Ah doan't knaw what's happened to thy yead. A man o' thy age, callorpering and hopping around at athletics. What in the name o' the devil coom ovver thee o' late ? "

" Ah ain't gate a word to say," Sam muttered, stubbornly.

Mully looked at the paper, and then she looked at Sam, squatting there in the wardrobe with her best boots in his hand.

" Sam Small," she said. " Come and sit ovver here o' t' sofa."

Sam did as he was bid.

" Now lad," she said. " There's summat behind all this. Spit it out. Now what is it ? "

Sam looked at Mully, and he swallowed once or twice, and then he decided it was no use lying to Mully.

" Well, Mully," he said. " It's summat like this. Ah found out Ah could fly."

" Tha found what ? " Mully asked.

" Fly," he said. " Sitha ! . Ah'll show thee."

So he took off and did a couple of turns round the room and then glided down on tiptoe beside Mully again.

" Now, tha sees. Ah can fly," he said, triumphantly.

" So tha can," Mully agreed. " And varry nicely tha does it, too. What caps me is that tha didn't tell me about this when tha married me."

" Nay, it nobbut come ovver me lately."

" Well, a varry handy accomplishment it is, too, if tha axes me," Mully said. " Tha'll be able to wash windows that Ah cannot reach and mony things like that. Here, Sam, just hop up and wipe off that cobweb on t' ceiling there. It's been worrying me for two days now."

" Ah can fly like a seagull or like a pigeon," Sam said, as he went up after the cobweb, " but Ah can't yet fly like a lark."

" Well, don't be discouraged, lad. Happen that'll come wi' practice. Ah think tha does reight well for a beginner. How long's ta been at it, did ta say ? "

So Sam told her the whole story, about Faith and Mountains, and how he'd met Dickie Hogglethwaite.

" Well, he were a nice sort o' chap, and a Huddersfield lad on top of it, and when he axed me to do soom jumping, like, well, it were a chance for him to clean up a few bets."

" Well, there's nowt wrang wi' makking a little brass," Mully agreed. " Ah always like to have a sixpence on the Derby mysen if Ah can. But it seems tha's stirred up summat, what wi' all these newspaper lads downstairs, and a committee o' gentlemen to ax thee to try out for the British Olympic party."

" Well, us can settle all that reight fast," Sam said. " All us has got to do is just explain the truth, like—that Ah'm no athlete, but Ah just did it by flying. Thee just run down and tell 'em while Ah gate these boots blacked nicely for thee. Tell 'em Ah'm sorry Ah hoaxed 'em and there's no newspaper story for 'em, properly speaking."

Despite the fact that he had made a fortune on his self-doffing spindle, Sam still liked to black boots—especially Mully's. It gave him a great deal of pleasure, putting on the dauby blacking, brushing it off, then taking a nice soft cloth and rubbing and rubbing until the boots were burnished like glacé kid. So he lost himself in the job, feeling sure that Mully with her apt tongue was enough to settle any bunch of reporters.

After lunch, which was sheep's-head stew and suet dumplings, with a few side dishes of mashed turnips and pickled beets and new

potatoes, with lemon curd tarts and a pint of ale and a few toasted biscuits and cheddar cheese, Sam took a stroll to sort of ease off his belt a little.

The minute he got on the road a young chap came up and said his name was Jim McGillicuddy.

" Is ta a newspaper lad, happen ? " Sam said.

The young man said he would tell the truth, and he was.

Sam went on walking up the hill, beside the orange groves, and the young chap walked beside him, explaining that he had to have a good story. If he didn't get a good story he would be ruined. He was only just starting as a reporter, so he wanted a really good story.

All the other chaps had gone back to write a funny story on what Mully had said, but he wanted a story from Sam himself and that's why he had waited around.

" Well, there's nowt moar to it," Sam said. " Ah can fly, that's all."

" Fly ? "

" Aye ! "

" You mean, in an aeroplane ? "

" Nay, just on me own hook."

The chap didn't say anything for a while and they went on walking in step.

" Well, Mr. Small," he said, slowly. " I don't want to trouble you too much, but—if you're in the mood now—would you mind just—flying ? "

" Surely, lad," Sam said. " Here's a nice bit of a place here."

So he went over to where the road was near the slope of the canyon and took off. He did a turn or two over the canyon, circled over the edge of a ranch, glided back and came neatly to earth beside the reporter.

" Holy mackerel," the young man said. " Holy mackerel ! "

Then he ran off down the road, as fast as his legs would go.

But when Sam got home and was just sitting down to tea the reporter turned up again.

" Come in," Sam said, in his usual affable way. " Sit thee down and have a little tea."

" No thanks. Now look here, maybe I am nuts, but would you—that is—if I did see you before, will you do that again—fly ? "

" If tha likes," Sam said, not wanting to put himself too much forward.

And he took off in a straight-up, went round the dining room, hovered a while over the table and then floated, inch by inch, back into his seat.

" It's that simple," Sam explained.

" Simple ! " the chap exploded. " Why, you don't seem to realize that this is the biggest thing in the last fifty centuries of man's progress. Man can fly under his own power. It's big ! It's colossal ! It's terrific ! Why, with me as manager, we'd set the world on fire. We'd make millions ! "

" Millions ? " Mully asked, getting interested.

" Yes. We'd give exhibitions."

" Think o' that, now," Mully breathed.

" Ah were thinking o' giving an exhibition," Sam said. " Ah were thinking t'other day, that since it were at Sister Minnie's Ah first got t'idea, happen she'd like me to fly so it could be a sort of evidence of what Faith'll do, in a manner of speaking."

" Sister Minnie, never ! " the chap said. " No, sir. Look, you sign on with me and we'll make a tour—a world tour . . ."

" Nay, Ah doan't want to mak' no world tour. Ah just made one," Sam moaned, " and Ah doan't want another one only so far as it goes back to Yorkshire."

" Sam," Mully warned.

" Now, Mully—it's my flying and it's off to be ma judgment on what Ah do wi' it."

" Aye, and it were thy self-doffing spindle, too," Mully rebutted. " But if it had been thy judgment Owdicotts' mill'd still be using it for their own. Whose judgment were it we should gate us a lawyer and sue for our rights ? It were mine, weren't it ? But for that we'd still be on five pound ten a week as a mill foreman, instead of rich as we are, wouldn't we ? "

Sam said nothing.

" When it comes to handling brass, thee leave it all to me," Mully said. " No, if a little bit of a thing like flying can mak' us another fortune in America, then us'd be ninnies not to tak' it. Now thee forget t' money end, and me and this young chap will settle everything."

The next day the papers were all drawn up and signed.

" Now we're set," the young man said. " It's no use fooling with the movies, because people seeing a picture would only think it a fake. We'll hire Madison Square Garden in New York. All you'll have to do is just once each day, take off and fly round the Garden. I'll get the plane tickets and we'll fly East tomorrow."

" Fly," Mully said. " Why, lewk, then. Happen tha'd better get nobbut two tickets, and Sam could fly alongside us. Us'd save one fare that way."

" That's a champion idea," Sam said. " But there's ma luggage."

However, Jim would have none of it and when he pointed out that Sam might freeze solid going over the Rockies, Mully gave in and agreed that he should ride inside the plane.

The next day they took off and after that Sam hardly knew what did happen. Things came so fast that the poor lad got fair dizzy.

The minute they landed at Newark they were raced off by car to the grand suite of a hotel in New York. Then the room got full of people who talked to him and talked at him and pinched him and prodded him.

Then they asked him to fly.

"Hey, why should all these people see it without paying?" Mully asked.

"This is a publicity stunt," Jim explained. "It's the press. We've got to stir up interest."

So Sam did a few turns round the hotel room, but you never saw anything as suspicious as that bunch of New Yorkers. They climbed on chairs and felt for wires; they prodded Sam again to see if anything was fastened to him; they asked Mully to leave the room so she couldn't possibly hypnotize him, and finally they asked Sam to take his clothes off and fly so they could see there was no trickery, like a little engine in the seat of his breeches.

This was too much for Mully.

"Ah will not leave this room," she said stoutly, "and if ye think ma owd man's off to fly round naked as the day he was born showing everything he's gate, well ye're all bahn to hev another think cooming. Now put that in your pipes and smoak it."

They went out and more people came and Sam flew round for them. Doctors tapped his chest and tested his metabolism and took his blood pressure; psychologists asked him if a ton of feathers was lighter than a ton of lead; he was examined by a hypnotist, an alienist and a committee on psychic research.

Then, as suddenly as a clap of thunder on a summer day in Cumberland, the big night possessed him and he was in a dressing room and Mully was handing him a bunch of spangles and a few inches of silk.

"Ah will net wear it!" Sam raved.

"What, after all t' bother Ah hed makking it! Tha'll wear it or Ah'll know why."

"Eigh Mully, Ah'd lewk like one o' Tetley's Brewery horses at the Sunday School outing," Sam protested. "What is it?"

"Ah embroidered it," Mully said. "Sitha, there's a Union Jack on thy right chest, and a Stars and Stripes on t' left, out o' courtesy, as you might say. Now coom on, lad, put it on just to please ma."

So Sam looked at Mully and felt that sorry about her sitting up nights doing the embroidery, that he put on the costume. When Mully came back he was seeing how his backside looked in the mirror.

"Eigh Mully," he groaned, "Ah lewk like t'lad on t'flying trapeze, Ah do, for a fact."

"Well, tha couldn't expect to go out there flying round in thy best serge suit," Mully said. "And it's ovver late to change thy mind now—change thy su-it and tha'll be sure to rue it," she quoted.

"Well, Ah changed me suit already," Sam pointed out. "And that's bad luck reight off."

But they had no chance to argue. Jim came rushing in and dragged Sam down to the entrance.

"Now you're sure you can do it?" Jim asked. "Because there's the biggest crowd the Garden ever had—at a twenty two dollar top, too. You won't miss out?"

"Of course not," Sam said, irritably.

Then he was being pushed out, and there stood Sam Small, dressed in pink fleshings all embroidered up, and his white moustache jutting out. He stood dazed a minute, staring at the lights and blinking.

He put out his arms to take off, and then, suddenly, he began to think what would happen if he didn't fly.

There he stood, down in the middle of the enormous building, a funny little figure in pink silk and spangles, with his arms out and his jutting white moustache. Terror seized him and he stood still. For the thousands of people had begun to laugh. That laugh boomed and echoed and gathered until the whole place rang with it.

Poor Sam stood wishing the earth would swallow him. He was so struck with stage-fright that he turned to run away. But Jim stood in the doorway, waving and motioning frantically.

"For goodness sake—go on and fly," Jim shouted.

Sam turned, and putting his arms out again, got ready to take off. But his arms seemed heavy.

He was gripped by a horror. Perhaps it had all been a dream heretofore—and now perhaps he couldn't fly at all?

He was seized with panic, and he ran forwards a few steps with his arms out, attempting to get the feel of the air. But it was like being paralyzed. He couldn't feel the air. He knew it would never hold him. Something was holding him down.

So he ran and ran with his arms out—and that's what the people saw: a funny little man running round like a chicken—a man attempting to fly.

And they laughed and roared, and the harder they laughed the faster Sam ran and hopped. He jumped and skipped until he was almost dead of exhaustion, and then he stopped, knowing he was hearing a different sound. The people were booing and roaring with anger. He looked up and saw programmes and newspapers sailing through the air.

In a half-daze, he felt himself being hurried and dragged along the corridor. He had cinema-like sensations of policemen drawing their clubs and pushing people back. And then he was in the dressing room again, and Mully was beside him and Jim was looking into his eyes.

" It's all reight," Sam said, thickly. " Gi' 'em all their brass back again. Ah'll pay for the hall and everything if it tak's ivvery penny us has got."

Jim stood up.

" All right, Mr. Small," he said. " I don't want you to feel bad."

Then Sam sat alone with Mully, and she looked at him.

" Ah suppose tha's mad at ma," he said.

" Nay lad," she said. " Ah'm not mad, but tha did lewk a bit funny out there, hopping around. Go on and change thy clothes, and let's nivver say no moar about flying again."

Then she went out, and Sam changed his clothes.

" Happen Ah only dreamt Ah could fly," he said to himself. Sadly, he got dressed. What hurt him more than anything else was the way Mully had looked at him. She would never again have faith in him. Faith ! But that had started the whole thing !

Then it happened. Just as Sam was pulling on his breeches he remembered one psychiatrist—a little professor with a beard—saying : " Say to yourself : ' I can fly ! I can ! I *can* ! ' and don't ever disbelieve it."

Quick as a flash Sam slipped his braces over his shoulders, and in one breath yelled :

" And, by gum, Ah *can* fly. Oppen that door ! "

As the door opened he took off and went out over the heads of the policemen, who ducked and fell flat to get out of the way of his soaring body.

He shot down the corridor over the heads of the people, and then zoomed out into the great auditorium.

" Ah'll show ye ! " he yelled.

He raced up in a tremendous climb and looped over so he almost brushed the ceiling. Down below most of the people had gone home, but he saw a small knot, faces white in the lights as they stared up at him in disbelief.

He shot down at them like a plane in a power dive. They scattered in terror and fell over themselves, and Sam streaked away for the entrance. He screamed over the heads of the jammed crowd and shot out into the street.

" Now, can Ah fly ? " he shouted, and he looped and zoomed and dived through the night, streaking past lighted windows, skimming over taxis and heads of people, shooting up to the tops of the houses.

Lightly he perched on a roof, and watched the scene below. Taxis smashed into each other and people grouped round women who had fainted. Police whistles blew, sirens screeched as police cars and ambulances and fire engines raced up.

He heard people yelling at him and saw below the white mass of their faces. The firemen began to raise their ladders.

" Come down off there, or you'll break your damned neck," a policeman shouted.

" Ah'll show ye," chanted Sam.

" O.K. tough guy," the policeman said. He started up the fire escape ladder, his gun in his hand.

Sam advanced one foot off the parapet, and then stepped out. Women screamed and collapsed. But Sam merely laughed. He flipped over, did a slow spiral round the fire ladder, and suddenly shot down at the crowd. At the last second he banked up again a few hundred feet.

Then he swooped again and raced along over their heads. He tore up through the city, he zoomed round Broadway and floated up the side of the *Times* building. He shot along the streets, leaving tangles of traffic in his wake.

Then, suddenly, his anger left him, and, feeling weary of all the people, he circled slowly, up, up into the night, until the city was a spangle of lights down below. He could hear only faintly, now, the roar of the metropolis. Beneath him was the island, a lace of light : the shimmering strands were streets, the delicate filaments of fiery beads were bridges over rivers, the crawling glow-worms were ships in the harbour, the incandescent little caterpillar that inched along far away was a train. In the majestic blackness far above the city, there was nothing to share the purity of Sam's lonesomeness except the drone of an aeroplane, far to the south in the vast night sky.

He looked over it in wonder and confusion. And as he did so all his native caution came back.

" Eigh now, Sam Small," he said to himself, " tha has gone and done it. How the devil is'ta off to find out where tha lives ? "

He looked down, but not knowing New York, all the streets looked alike. He had only a vague idea that one of the tall buildings below must be his hotel. But they all looked the same. Sadly he flew up and down, but he knew he couldn't recognize his hotel even if he saw it.

" Eigh, what a dew. Ah wish Ah were home i' Yorkshire," he said.

Disconsolately, he flew round until he saw a roof that looked fairly comfortable. It was a sort of projecting roof that had a little lawn and a fountain, and best of all a swing seat.

" Eigh, gardins way up on top o' buildings," Sam said, " What

an idea ! However, lad, here's a soft place to kip, and t' first thing i' t' morning, tha can get down quietly and find out where tha lives."

When Sam woke he found the sun shining brightly on his face and a policeman holding his arm.

" By gum, Ah maun o' slept," Sam said.

" Now, how did you get up here ? " the policeman asked.

" Why, Ah flew up, lad," Sam said, honestly.

At this a woman in the background, standing by the penthouse door, gave a scream.

" The bat man ! " she yelled, and then fainted dead away.

" So, I've got you," the cop said, drawing his gun. " And don't you try any flying tricks on me to escape."

But the minute Sam saw the gun he decided. He was sick to death of the whole silly business, so he shot straight up in the air twenty feet, went over the edge of that building, and raced away in a power dive. It was so fast that the cop had only time to take six wild shots. Sam heard them banging behind him, and felt the bullets tearing through the air—for he had become so sensitively attuned to air vibrations that he could feel even the rip of a bullet that was not near at all.

The bullets scared Sam very badly, and made his heart flutter so fast that he had to stop and rest. He came to rest on a convenient parapet. He had perched there for only a minute, when he heard a sound behind him. He turned and saw a nice looking young woman, taking a sunbath on a mattress.

" Hoops, ma'am," Sam said, turning away politely. " Ah'm right sorry Ah interrupted."

The woman gave a scream and fainted away, too. Sam perched there, scratching his head and wondering whether or not he should get help, when the woman's husband came racing out with a shot-gun and began blazing away.

" Drat ma buttons," Sam said, " they maun think Ah'm a cock partridge or summat, and this is t' open season."

Of course, he was thinking that as he flew, because he was going away from the sunbathing lady at top speed.

That morning was something for a man to remember. Every time Sam came down to land, the people below began yelling :

" The bat man—the bat man," and they raced up the streets keeping Sam in sight. All Sam wanted to do was to land and find his hotel, but each time he got near the earth the people crowded and clutched at him and traffic stopped and there was no chance for him to slip down unobserved.

" Ba gum, Ah'm fair sick o' this," Sam moaned.

He flew up again and finally came to rest on one of the gargoyles of the Chrysler Building. Even then there was no rest, for people opened the windows and stared at him and shouted.

Then there was a stir on a balcony below him, and a policeman shouted to him to come down.

But by this time Sam had lost his age-long respect for the majesty of the blue uniform.

"Now lad," he warned, "if tha climbs up here Ah'll just fly away to some other building and tha'll have it to do all over again. Ah'm staying where Ah am, and the only person Ah want to talk to is ma Mully. Fetch Mully here and Ah'll talk to her. Ah'm fair sick of all this, Ah am. Ah'm right sick of it, Ah might almost say. So tak thysen and thy gun away and fetch Mully here."

Sam hopped off and flew a little higher, until he was sitting right against the pole of the spire on the Chrysler Building.

And there he sat, hour after hour, until it was afternoon. They tried to coax him down, but Sam had his Yorkshire up and was just stubborn and set that he wouldn't come down till they brought Mully.

Finally there was a shout below, and Sam saw Mully's bonnet showing up on a little bit of a balcony. She came climbing up, and

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Sam flew down and gave her a bit of a hand until they were both on a ledge, snug as could be. Mully stared at him and almost got tearful for a moment.

"Eigh Sam," she said. "In thy shirtsleeves all night, perched up here like a cock-sparrer. Tha maught ha' caught thy death o' cold."

"Mully," Sam pleaded, "now doan't start in plaguing ma. Help ma gate out o' this mess, and s'welp me, bob, Ah'll never lift ma two feet off the ground together again. These bobbies hev been shooting at ma. Tell 'em Ah nobbut want to get down and goa on hoam to Yorkshire again."

"Nay lad," Mully said. "Tha's put thy foot in it and there's owd Nick popping below."

"What's up now?"

"What ain't up," she said. "Tha hasn't awf done it, now. Tha's tangled the city up. There's been dozens of traffic accidents from people staring at thee. A skyscraper company has offered a hundred pounds a day if tha'll just light on their flagpole once a day."

"Oooah, drat me buttons," Sam moaned.

"That's not awf on it," Mully said. "One awf o' t' city wants thee shot as a bat man, and scientists say tha can't be true, and ministers say tha maun be a devil, and ivvery woman i' t' city is barring her windows. Tha's a menace, that's what tha is. They hed to call off all t' schools, for mothers is flaid tha'll fly away wi' their bairns. Police want to lock thee up because tha could rob ivvery skyscraper i' t' city at neight by flying i' windows.

"Them that doan't think tha should be shot want thee deported as an undesirable alien, and just as mony folk want thee kept here behind bars."

"What on earth for?"

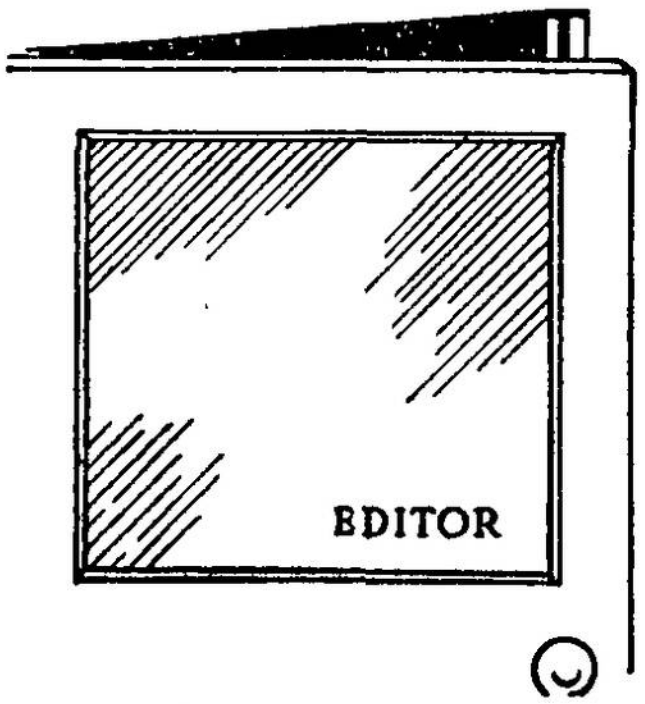
"Well, tha can fly, lad. Why, one chap wi' slant eyes offered ma a hundred million dollars if Ah'd gate thee to goa to his country."

"What for?"

"Why, soa tha can teach his army how to fly, then they could strap a bomb on every sojer, and the whole army could fly on its own hook ovver any city in' t' world and bomb it to pieces and then land and capture it wi'out trouble."

"Ma gum," Sam said, "that's so! If there was an army of chaps could fly like me we could conquer t' whole world. What did'ta tell him?"

"Why, Ah told him straight that tha were a Britisher, and if any army is off to have men 'at can fly on their own hook, it's the British army. But a newspaper chap heard ma say that, and now all



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TESTIMONIALS FROM SATISFIED STUDENTS

. . . For lack of time my output is small, but during the past few months I have sold the following: GERMAN PRISONERS (*English Review*), BIRD ISLAND (*Argus*), CAREERS FOR GIRLS (*Teen and Twenty*), PREMATURE BABIES (*Housewife*), CHILDREN'S WARD (*local*), REPERTORY IN LYNN (*Theatre News*), BRITAIN'S OLDEST FAIR (*East Anglian*).
I concentrated on smaller markets because I wanted to pay for the course by selling my work, and this I have achieved.
Miss D. H., KING'S LYNN.

1st *June*, 1949.
. . . I have to report that my story STONY SOIL has sold to the American magazine for fifty dollars.
R. A. P. (Clerk), KENSINGTON.

17*th December*, 1949.
. . . You will be pleased to hear that I am in the Christmas number of *Teen and Twenty*, my own sketches, too! *Woman's Mirror* has also taken five articles, and I have sold another to *Needlewoman and Needlecraft.*
M. B., COLWYN.

27*th October*, 1949.
. . . I have pleasure in forwarding the exercises on Lesson Nine, and would point out that an article on this theme has been accepted by *Housewife* . . . this has given me considerable encouragement, as it is my first article to be accepted by a periodical of this class . . .
(Police Inspector), WINCHMORE HILL.

March, 1949.
. . . I have recently sold a short story called PERHAPS TOO SOON to the magazine *Good Housekeeping*, so naturally I want to thank you for all the help you have given me . . .
Miss B. D., HEADCORN.

6*th August*, 1949.
. . . I am writing this short note to inform you that my short story, THE ARREST, has been accepted and published by *Reveille* . . .
T. P. (Bus Driver), STOKE-ON-TRENT.

3*rd October*, 1949
. . . I recently added up my earnings from the *East Daily Press* and found it to be about £75.
Mrs. J. M. F. (Housewife), B.A.O R. 5

17*th October*, 1949
. . . I rewrote my story on the lines you suggested and s it to the *Sunday Chronicle*. It appeared on page 2 of paper yesterday. A few cuts had been made, but otherw it was printed as I wrote it.
Lt.-Col. W. S. H., JERSEY

29*th November*, 1949
. . . It was extremely kind of you to send me such an excell "write up" for my book, and I sincerely thank you for Naturally I am very excited about it. What is most gra fying is that the publishers have shown a definite enthusia about the work. Many thanks for the help and encoura ment you have always given me.
Capt. B. N. (Royal Navy, Retired), FOLKESTONE

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the papers demand that they doan't let thee leave this country till tha gives up thy secret."

"Ah have no secret," Sam moaned. "Ah can nobbut fly, that's all."

"Aye, but they doan't know that. Eh lad, tha's upset the whole world. Why, the minute they saw tha could fly, aeroplane stocks all went to bits, and then railways and boats shares went to bits and steel followed them, because they summed it up that if people could fly they're not off to need any aeroplanes or boats or railways or motor cars to ride in.

"Paper said t' President called a special meeting o' their Parliament or whativver it is to pass a bill for new money to build national defences against flying men. In fact, to put it in a nutshell, Sam Small, tha's mucked up the whole bloomin' world."

"Eigh," Sam moaned, "it were that California 'at's to blame. It were a balmy climate for fair—it turned me balmy onyhow. And all Ah ivver wanted, Mully, was to be back hoam i' Yorkshire, wi' a good pint o' ale, and a few lads to pass a nice evening wi'—or sitting hoam workin' on a nice rag rug. And now Ah'm in a reight proper mess."

He perched on the ledge, moodily.

Sam thought a while, and looked out over the city. The sun still shone where they were, but below it was getting almost shadowy and dusk. Then he looked at Mully decisively.

"Millicent Small," he said. "Dosta luv ma, lass?"

"Nay lad, doan't talk so soft."

"Ah mean it. It's important. Dosta luv ma?"

At that Mully began to weep—much to Sam's astonishment. Finally she looked up at him.

"Sam Small," she said finally. "Tha hesn't axed ma thet for nigh on twenty year."

"Well, Ah'm a man o' few words," Sam said. "Happen Ah've often thowt about axing thee; but tha knows how a chap is. Soa now, Ah'm axing thee."

Mully sniffed and looked at Sam.

"Sammywell Small," she said, "if Ah doan't, lad, then for the last twenty year Ah've been living under false pretences."

"That's all Ah want to hear," Sam said.

He got up and squared his shoulders.

"Now put thy hand in mine," he said, "and don't be flaid. Just have faith in me, that's all."

Mully got up and looked down at the evening streets far below.

"Eigh, lad, there's off to be a hell of a bloomin' splash if tha mak's a mistake," she said.

But she put her hand in his.

" Awf a minute, Sam," she said. " Happen this'll work, happen not. But if it doan't, there's one question that's been burning ma for a long time."

" Fire away, lass."

" Well—Sam—did'ta really have owt to do wi' that widow i' Harrogate that summer we went there on us holidays ? "

" Mully," Sam said, " true as us is facing us Maker reight now, there's nivver been nub'dy but thee."

Mully looked at him a second, then she tied the strings of her bonnet tighter under her chin.

" That's all Ah wanted to hear thee say, lad," she said.

She put her hand in his again.

" Count three for me, lad."

" One—" said Sam.

Mully took a deep breath.

" Two—" said Sam.

Mully shut her eyes.

" Just have faith in me," Sam told her.

" All reight," she said. " Ah do believe in thee, Sam."

" Then here we goa ! Three ! "

Mully stepped forwards with her eyes shut. She felt the air rushing past her. It was a sweet, glorious flow of air. She opened her eyes. Then she smiled ; because there was Sam right beside her, the tips of his fingers touching hers and they were swinging round in a big circle, volplaning as smoothly as a couple of albatrosses. And like that, together, they went up and up in a great spiral.

And that's the last New York ever saw of them. The people in the buildings, staring out, and the black crowds far below on the streets, craning their necks backward, could see that twin flight of two bodies, near to each other, matching their movements with the telepathic exactitude of birds, going up and up until they were dots against the washed sadness of the evening sky—up and up until they could be seen no more.

And thus it was that Sam and Mully Small escaped New York and flew back to Yorkshire and settled down again.

And if you ever go to Yorkshire and get to a place called Polkingthorpe Brig, near Huddersfield, you can test this story. Any evening you wish you can go down to the *Spread Eagle*, and there, with a pint of nice ale before him, a blazing fire behind him, and a handful of friends beside him, you can find a chap named Sam Small.

He's been all round the world. He has a wife named Mully. He has a daughter named Vinnie in the films, who was married not long ago to a young American chap named Jim McGillicuddy.

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But it's no use asking him if he can fly. Because if you do he'll look you straight in the eye and say :

" Nay, lad, that's not me. Tha maun be thinking o' t' other Sam Small—the chap what dropped his musket and held up t' battle o' Waterloo."

* * *

ANSWERS to SPLICE THE MAINBRACE! on page 122

1. *The* Narcissus, *in Joseph Conrad's novel " The Nigger of the Narcissus."*
2. Quinquireme of Nineveh, *in the poem " Cargoes," by John Masefield.*
3. *The Sieve in which the Jumblies went to sea, in Edward Lear's Nonsense Rhyme.*
4. *Noah's Ark, in the Book of Genesis in the Bible.*
5. *The boat " The Lady of Shalott " in the poem of that title, by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.*
6. *The* Pequod, *from the novel " Moby Dick," by Herman Melville.*
7. *The old black barque in Alfred Noyes' poem, " Forty Singing Seamen."*
8. *Peggotty's black barge houseboat at Yarmouth, in " David Copperfield," by Charles Dickens.*
9. *The* Nancy Bell, *in W. S. Gilbert's " Yarn of the ' Nancy Bell.' "*

* * *

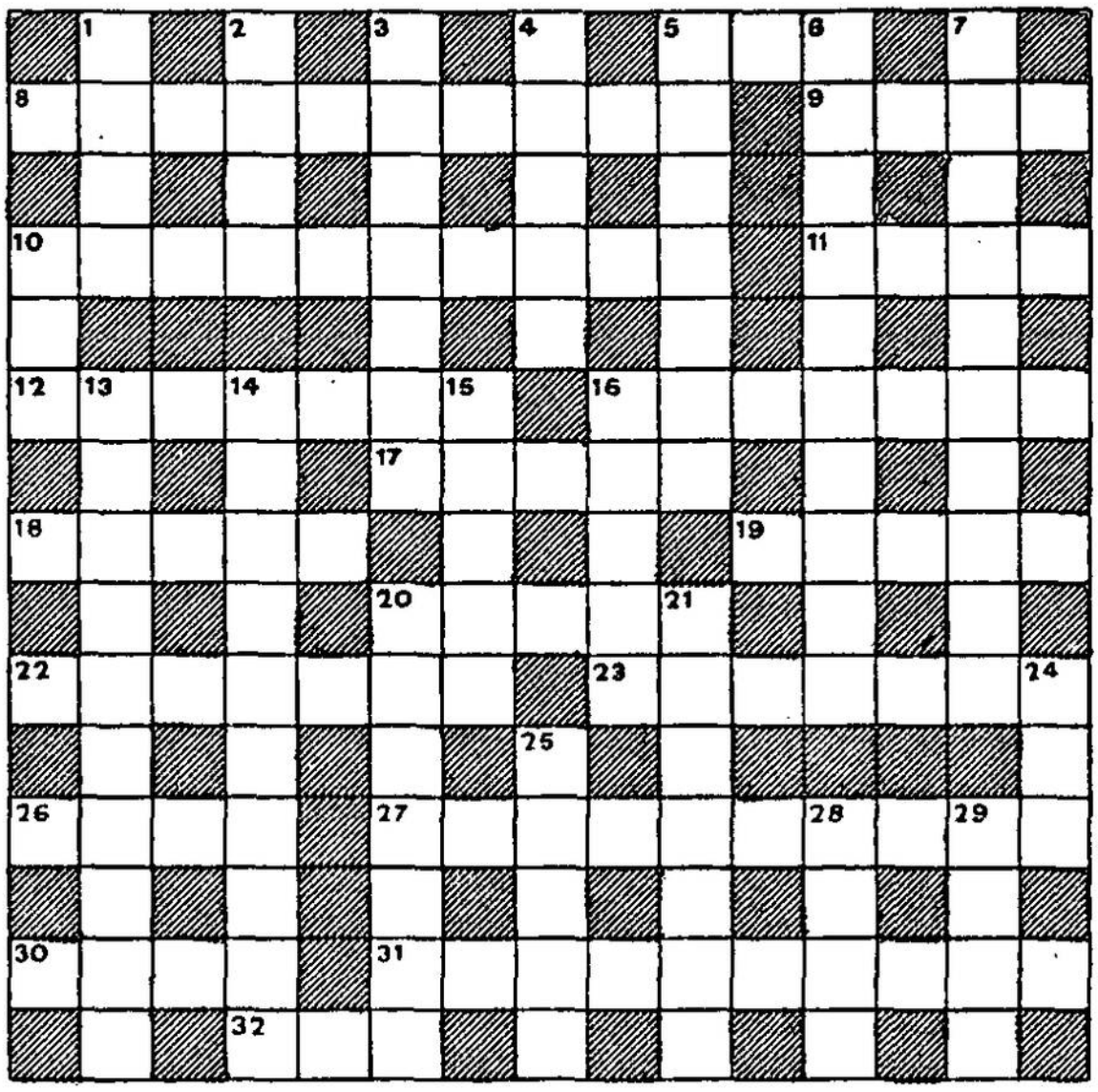
SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 160

Across. 5, Cod. 8, Run through. 9, Iron. 10, Patrolling. 11, Mark. 12, Doublet. 16, Dilutes. 17, Raven. 18, Lethe. 19, Stump. 20, Below. 22, Asunder. 23, Tendons. 26, Arch. 27, Profligate. 30, Sign. 31, Kingfisher. 32, Dye.

Down. 1, Aura. 2, Star. 3, Driller. 4, Cubit. 5, Chagrin. 6, Dismounted. 7, Journeyman. 10, Pad. 13, Overstrain. 14, Behindhand. 15, Taper. 16, Depot. 20, Bespoke. 21, Well off. 24, Sue. 25, Bound. 28, Gist. 29, Thee.

ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 159



CLUES

Across

5 Initial instruction to the postman with the fishy parcel? (3).

8 Producer's orders—or the gory end to a duel (3, 7).

9 A metal title given to a stern disciplinarian (4).

10 A quart of poteen caused this, perhaps? (10).

11 "Methinks he hath no drowning — upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows" (The Tempest) (4).

12 Surely a *single* fifteenth century garment? (7).

16 Weakens many musical instruments (7).

17 An eloquent black bird, it seems (5).

18 French and English articles give a classical example of forgetfulness (5).

19 This has a double meaning to the dentist-cricketer (5).

20 Like part of 22 across (5).

22 To "those whom God hath joined together" let no man put this (7).

23 The sinews of half a score University members? (7).

26 The daily woman might come from Marble this! (4).

27 Epithet for a spendthrift (10).

30 Mark the better half of this old soldier (4).

31 Sovereign of all anglers? (10).

32 Modern colouring where speed is essential (3).

Down

1 Subtle emanation (4).

2 Part of the swiftest archer is a heavenly target for him (4).

3 Sergeant-major — or miner? (7).

4 It follows young Reynard for a foot and a half (5).

5 Charing might lead to this feeling on the part of 21 down (7).

6 The result of Sidney getting up backwards? (10).

7 Skilled artisan who might be an experienced traveller (10).

10 A soft saddle — best not met on foot at night? (3).

13 Preposition with some effort making it doubly so (10).

14 Where to hide a yawn when late (10).

15 More of a light carrier than a light giver generally (5).

16 End of the trolley-bus line? (5).

20 Otherwise engaged, often a gentleman of the cloth (7).

21 The last straw on the camel's back (4, 3).

24 What! Prosecute little Susan? (3).

25 "On, to the — of the waste, On, to the City of God" (Matthew Arnold) (5).

28 Cut the register down to find the substance (4).

29 The beginning of the end! (4).

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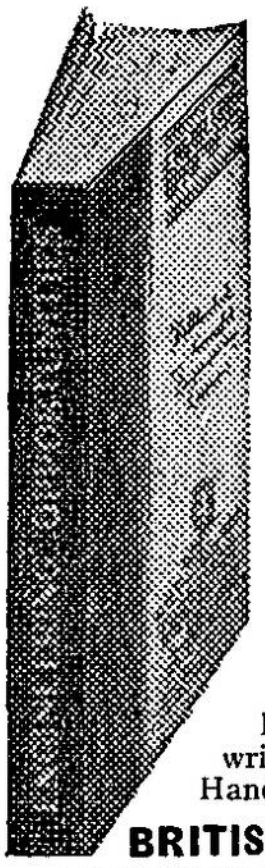

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